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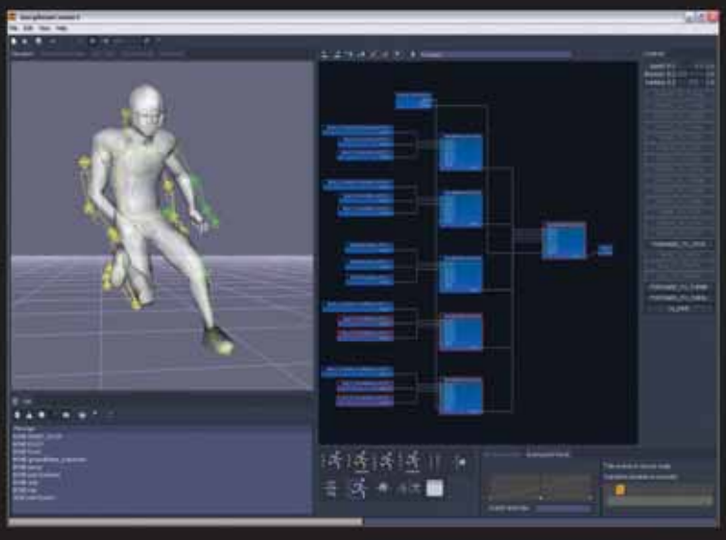


morpheme is the industry's first graphically authorable animation engine. morpheme consists of morpheme:runtime: an advanced runtime animation engine for PLAYSTATION®3, Xbox 360™ and PC, and morpheme:connect: a highly-customizable 3D authoring application.

morpheme gives animators and developers unprecedented control over the look and feel of their animations in-game: blends, transitions, compression, etc. can all be previewed and modified graphically in morpheme:connect and live on the target platform.

morpheme:runtime ships with full source code and integrates seamlessly with euphoria, NaturalMotion's Dynamic Motion Synthesis technology.

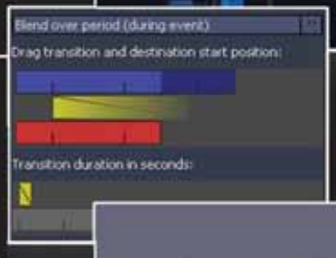
For more information, visit www.naturalmotion.com

blend tree

Advanced graphical tools for building complex blend trees. Real-time visualization of animation source contribution through node highlighting

blending

Graphical control of transition blending between states in the transition graph



multiple characters

Visualization of multiple runtime characters in morpheme:connect for easy authoring and analysis of character interaction

network

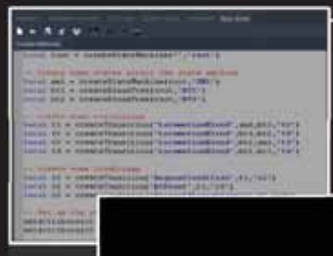
Advanced graphical tools for creating and visualizing transition networks through drag-and-drop

control parameters

Exposure of custom high-level controls for entire animation system. Real-time manipulation through sliders or game pad controller

scripting

Full Lua scripting for automating tasks, adding AI logic or polling game pads for real-time input



timeline

Graphical mark up of animation data to add one-shot and duration events, for highlighting footfalls, sound effects, etc.

node palette

Advanced blend notes for dragging and dropping into transition network. Fully customizable node types through C++ and scripting

animation browser

Easy browsing and selection (drag & drop) of source animation. Animation list is automatically updated to reflect changed source files

transition requests

Exposure of custom transition messages. In-tool emulation of interaction between morpheme:runtime and game AI system

www.naturalmotion.com | contact@naturalmotion.com | © 2007 NaturalMotion | morpheme is a registered trademark of NaturalMotion

NATURALMOTION

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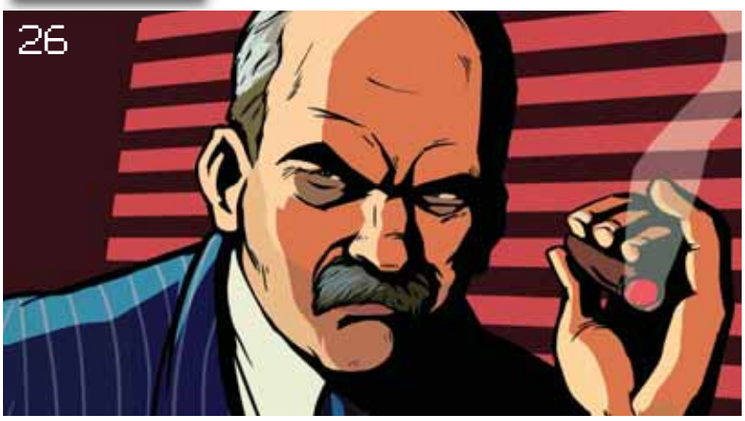
A look at cutting edge graphics in association with Autodesk



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ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"It was so sad when his skull got fucking vaporised..."
John Romero, p16

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Codemasters expands to Guildford

UK publisher opens studio in South East's well known development talent base as ramp up for new projects continues

Codemasters has expanded, opening a new studio in Guildford.

The move is the latest step in an aggressive expansion push from the Britsoft firm as it aims for an IPO next year.

Last year, the studio opened an outsourcing resource, Codemasters Studios Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, making the Guildford studio its third – the company will continue to run its main studio based at the corporate HQ in Southam, Warwickshire.

To make sure the new studio opening goes smoothly, the company has signed up Adrian Bolton to manage Codemasters Studios Guildford. Bolton moves over from his post as development director at EA Criterion, also based in Guildford.

Designed to attract development talent from the South East, Codemasters Studios Guildford will have an initial staff level of 35, with an emphasis on programming.

The studio size will be upscaled annually: in the first year the team will be supporting Southam's projects such as *Operation Flashpoint 2*, *Race Driver ONE* and also backing the Central Technology Group (which made in-house engine Neon).

It is also expected that the Guildford team will support the on-going activity behind Codemasters' top secret new IP-based action game, previously given the code-name 'Project Strike Team' and revealed by *Develop* at the start of the year.

Gavin Cheshire, VP of Codemasters Studios says these are "exciting times" for Codemasters' development teams

"Although initially supporting other Codemasters studios the Guildford team will develop its own titles..."

Codemasters Southam also plans to start working on another new project in 2008 which the Guildford office will contribute to.

However, developers working at the studio are promised even meatier projects to manage as time goes one – after 12 months it is expected Codemasters Studios Guildford will develop entire projects in-house as its team grows.

Codemasters already employs 255 development staff, with 185 of those at Codemasters Southam and a further 70 at the the art-focused studio in Malaysia.

"Following our investment announcements and recent product successes, it is clear to see that these are very exciting times for everyone with the expanded Codemasters Studios group," Codemasters Studios VP Gavin Cheshire told *Develop*.

"With Codemasters Studios in Southam, Kuala Lumpur and now Guildford, we can continue to grow our business and create the products we want to make. We look forward to welcoming a new wave of development talent to Codemasters as we continue to grow our product portfolio and technology with projects such as Neon."

www.codemasters.com

WORLD*VIEW* GLOBAL NEWS > p08

Editorial
Shadow of the collossi

So with entertainment giants Warner Bros *(opposite)* and Scholastic *(see page 43)* now courting developers directly it's clear that once again the big media companies have to come to play on our turf.

Big brands and non-traditional property holders are currently out in force in games development, pursuing equally non-traditional deals with studios. WB and Scholastic join a list that includes Burger King, Red Bull and Disney – as we go to press word is out that manga firm Tokyopop is working with a well-known US talent agency to match its comic books with games development deals. And only last month, Disney Interactive Studios gained further credibility – and showed its cash credentials – by winning over designer Warren Spector and acquiring his new studio Junction Point.

All the above companies insist that their activity is different to licensing deals and better than traditional publishers. While this is most likely because they've had their fingers burnt by our industry's dud licensing deals to publishers and want more control, they will also have learnt a lot about how their own mediums – specifically books and films – value the creators of content above distribution.

We have heard all that before, and questions remain as to whether they really are that 'different'. Can WB or Disney really get a games studio to devise a cross-media franchise like Batman or Pirates of the Carribbean? Either way, I'd say it's still great news – but not because US media firms will finally start taking our calls.

In truth, it means traditional publishers will have to react. As we learn elsewhere in this issue, proper project management and decent publishing deals are business and production lynchpins to a good game. So every challenge or erosion of the traditional slave/master approach to making games between a creator and a distributor can only be a good thing for developers and the industry as a whole.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

That's not

Warner Bros charges into games development with studio acquisitions,

Recently-promoted Warner Bros Interactive boss Samantha Ryan has revealed to *Develop* that she is spearheading a new strategy to to increase the number of games the company produces by up to six times over the next five years, via product signings, in-house development and studio acquisitions.

The news came following the establishment of WB Games in the US, a new production studio that will manage all the self-published games that the company produces. WB Games is based in Kirkland, Seattle, near Monolith, the one development house WBIE owns – and where Ryan began her career alongside WBIE founder Jason Hall.

"Our goal is to increase the number of games we're producing by five or six times what we're currently producing in the next five to six years," explained Ryan. "We also hope to acquire more developers over time."

WBIE was formed in 2004 by former Monolith boss Hall, who recently moved on to set up his own company – Ryan, who took over as head of Monolith when Hall moved to WB, stepped up to take his place once again, now as head of the whole operation, in February this year.

"I really feel that Monolith is the template for what worked well for Warner Brothers – which is that you acquire a games studio because it makes great games and has the right people and everything works well, and not disturb it. So for potential studios I wouldn't want to move them or disturb them, I would just want to buy them and let them continue to do the great work that they have been doing."

Already, WBIE has officially announced deals with the UK's Traveller's Tales for *Lego Batman*, Australian outfit Red Tribe for production of a new *Looney Tunes* game, and Los Angeles' Way Forward for DS game *Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck*. Other deals are also in the works with "developers around the world" but are currently unannounced.

"Our goal is to increase the number of games we're currently producing by five to six times..."

Samantha Ryan, Warner Bros.

While all those above are based on classic Warner Bros properties, Ryan said a large chunk of the WB Games slate will come from original IP, too.

She explained: "We do acknowledge that a large part of our portfolio will come from our theatrical properties and some of the great library IP that Warner Bros has accumulated over the years,

all, folks!

internal development and external product signings all in the offing

such as *Looney Tunes*, but we expect 30 to 40 per cent wil come from original IP."

There's also a chance that the IP discovered in the games space will be perfect to cross over into other mediums – Warner Bros is of course a force to be reckoned with in Hollywood – reversing the traditional licensing cycle.

In fact, there's much of the traditional games industry Ryan wants to challenge as WB powers up – WBIE's strength, she said, would be that it has someone with a development background running the business rather than a sales-focused publisher.

"My games development background gives us an edge because we can go in and ask the questions that game developers ask developers and which publishers don't necessarily ask.

"It has been a really beneficial approach for us so far," Ryan said.

"WB has a history of really valuing creativity and valuing the creators – you see that all the time in theatrical productions where there are producers and directors that have worked with Warner Bros. for years and years and years because their input is so valued. And you're really only now seeing that extend into the games space where a real value is now placed on the creators."

www.wbie.com

ONLINE EXTRA

Read the full-length Q&A with Samantha Ryan at **www.developmag.com**

Wii mania sweeps across UK studios

Another studio has pledged its allegiance to Nintendo, *Develop* has discovered, as publisher Oxygen's new London studio commits itself to just Wii and DS development.

Publishing director Kevin Hassall explained that Oxygen Studios' decision was spurred by the Nintendo machine's fast growing installed base of casual users.

"Oxygen's objective has always been to cater for mainstream audiences. So, if we had set up Oxygen Studios a couple of years ago they would probably have started with a PS2 title," he said.

"But today the DS is the ascendant mainstream format, and it looks like the Wii will repeat that awesome success. So inevitably Oxygen Studios is starting with the Nintendo platforms – it's simply a reflection of the success that Nintendo have had with the mainstream market."

He added: "In future the studio may well extend its technology beyond Nintendo's formats. It is absolutely a question of which platforms the mainstream consumers are playing on."

It's a mood catching on with other studios as well – Gusto Games has recently established new studio in Derby that will also be Wii and DS exclusive. (*More on that on page 43.*)

And the decision to focus solely on Nintendo's formats is certainly something that we haven't heard the last of: *Develop* knows of two other studios getting ready to confirm their status as exclusively focusing on Wii and DS, with official comments due soon.

Currently, Nintendo has direct deals with only a few third-party studios around the world – Kuju London is a Wii-focused team thanks to its contracts with the firm directly – but it is clear the company wants to make sure developers remain engaged. It recently made its first studio acquisition in some time by buying Japanese developer Monolith Soft from Namco.

And from a tech point of view the format-holder has been growing its tools and middleware program. Fonix, Torque and Vicious now all offer official third-party tools and engines for Wii developers, proving that the technology ecosystem supporting the creation of games for the new console is growing in line with developers' passions for the hardware..

WorldView

Our regular round up of development stories from across the globe…

HERTFORD, UK

Late July saw the relaunch of our site at www.developmag.com. With news updated throughout the day, regular features appearing across the week and a growing resource of tutorials and studio profiles, it's the ultimate site for games developers. And there's more to come – our jobs section is to be rapidly expanded very soon, and more features and community elements will roll out over the coming months.

www.developmag.com

UTAH, USA

Outspoken games designer David Jaffe, who devised *God of War*, has left his creative director role at Sony Computer Entertainment America's Santa Monica Studios to form Eat, Sleep, Play with Incognito founder Scott Campbell. He has softened the blow for his former employers, however, by signing a multi-year deal with them to exclusively develop PS3 and PSP titles.

Jaffe and Campbell previously worked together on the *Twisted Metal* series and the PlayStation Network title *Calling All Cars*. Eat, Sleep, Play's first project will be the PS2 title *Twisted Metal: Heads On*, scheduled for release stateside this winter, although Jaffe has said that it won't be considered the studio's first proper game.

As for the rest of Campbell's studio Incognito, Sony has stated that the "core members of the team" responsible for *Warhawk*, the forthcoming multiplayer PSN and Blu-ray shooter, will "remain in the SCEA Santa Monica Studios fold" to continue developing content for the game.

www.us.playstation.com

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, USA

July was an interesting month for Epic Games.

To start off, the studio and tool provider was arguably the biggest third-party force during the month's retooled E3, playing a major part in both the Microsoft and Sony press conferences.

For Microsoft, the studio will be providing Games for Windows Live integration for Unreal Engine 3, while also developing *Gears of War* for the PC.

As for Sony, the company has bagged the Midway-published *Unreal Tournament 3* as a console exclusive for 2007, and has confirmed that UE3 will get a number of PS3 optimisations.

However, a lawsuit from Canadian studio Silicon Knights alleges that Epic's seemingly unstoppable ubiquity isn't a perfect one, and has filed against the company claiming Epic has failed to deliver a working version of Unreal Engine 3.

Claiming lost revenues resulting from delayed development of its 360 game *Too Human*, Silicon Knights says the delay in introducing Xbox and PS3 versions of the engine has also damaged other studios, while Epic raked in the cash to fund development of *Gears of War*.

"Epic never intended to deliver Unreal Engine 3 as a fully functional game engine as promised," said Silicon Knights president Denis Dyack. "We have had extensive problems with the Unreal Engine 3 that Epic has been unwilling or unable to rectify."

Epic Games won't comment further about the case, VP Mark Rein saying in a statement: "We believe the claims against us are unfounded and without merit and we intend to fully defend against them."

www.epicgames.com

For global games development news as it breaks head to ***WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM***

ABERTAY, SCOTLAND

Game design challenge Dare to be Digital, organised by University of Abertay, has scored backing from UK TV station Channel 4.

The competition targets upcoming game design talent. This year's contest finishes during August's Edinburgh Interactive Festival and this year expanded to include bases in Guildford and Dublin as well as Abertay's host centre.

With Channel 4's involvement the event's scope will widen even further for next year, with Wales a priority region for 2008's competition. A selection committee will be in place in Cardiff by February 2008 to identify the teams who should go forward to benefit from the comprehensive package of support available.

www.daretobedigital.com

"Our Government could do much to learn from the Canadian government, which has created over 10,000 jobs in game development over the past four years through the right financial incentives..."

Game Developers' Association of Australia president Tom Crago and CEO Greg Bondar lobby the Australian Government for support

LEIPZIG, GERMANY

Studios hoping to expand their business or find new offices are being targeted by a new office complex built by the organisers of Germany's Game Convention.

Based in Leipzig near the Leipziger Messe convention center where the yearly European games industry event is held, the Game Developer Business Centre (GDBC) has been designed to attract studios to set up shop in Germany. The minds behind it say the location is ideal for those hoping to tap into Eastern European talent – or European talent overall.

"Our goal is to offer companies the resources and opportunities necessary to create a vibrant games industry in the Saxony area of Germany," said Matthias Rose, managing director of GDBC Europe.

GDBC is boasting a number of connections to both local services firms and educators as part of its way to attract business.Added Rose: "We're offering office space and infrastructure, but also our business expertise, connections, and access to our international network of partners, which we feel will maximize the opportunities for success for companies that choose to work with the GDBC."

www.gdbc-europe.com

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

Rare's *Develop* Award-winning *Viva Piñata* characters have travelled from the UK to the other side of the world – Australian studio Krome is to develop *Viva Piñata: Party Animals*, a new multiplayer party game for the Xbox 360. There's no slow-down behind the *Viva* brand: UK-based Rare is working on a new DS game for the franchise, and Climax Studios' Portsmouth team is working on a Games for Windows-compliant PC version.

www.vivapinata.com

LYON, FRANCE

Although its previously-announced Korean GDC event is currently on hold until next year, Game Developers Conference organiser CMP is still pursuing more local events – the latest is Lyon GDC, put together with Connection Events, organisers of Game Connection.

The inaugural show is set to take place from December 3rd to 5th alongside the 'business matchmaking' event.

Lyon GDC will boast content programmed by an advisory board of both local and international developers with an overall aim to promote and support the game industry, with 60 classes over a two-day period and one day of master classes and tutorials and also a key emphasis on networking thanks to the close proximity to Game Connection.

www.lyongdc.com

GLOBAL REPORTS

ZENIMAXIMISING

US-based ZeniMax Media, parent company of *Oblivion* developer Bethesda Softworks, has opened a MMO-focused studio in Baltimore. Zenimax Online Studios is headed by Mythic founder Matt Firor, who left the company after their acquisition by EA.

www.zenimax.com

APPEALING MAN HUNT

Rockstar has lodged a formal appeal with the Video Appeals Committee over the BBFC's refusal to classify *Manhunt 2*. A date will now be set for a hearing, where the committee will hear both sides' arguments and view a demonstration of the game. No information had been released regarding a similar appeal in the US as *Develop* went to press.

www.rockstar.com

TALKING MUMBOJUMBO

Casual game developer MumboJumbo has acquired Russian developer Hot Lava. The pair had previously worked together on the *7 Wonders* series of games. Hot Lava CEO Matt Lichtenwalter will be come MumboJumbo's VP of product development as part of the deal.

www.mumbojumbo.com

SLAPDASH EFFORT

Sticking with MumboJumbo, four executives have left the company to set up Slapdash Games, a new casual game outfit. The studio has been set up with the financial backing of fellow developer Method Solutions, whose head will take the role of acting CEO.

www.slapdashgames.com

BLACK & GREY

Guildford-based Lionhead Studios is this month celebrating ten years since its founding in 1997. The Molyneux-run studio, which was acquired by Microsoft early last year, is currently beavering away on *Fable 2*.

www.lionhead.com

DOWN (UNDER) WITH TAX

The Game Developers' Association of Australia has written to their minister for art pleading for support for the games industry. Australian film companies currently enjoy a 40 per cent reduction in taxes, a helping hand that the GDAA believes should also be extended to Australia's thriving games companies.

www.gdaa.com.au

UK 'All Stars' go to Gateshead

Codeworks GameHorizon to celebrate UK developers this September

Following on from its successful Northern Exposure event in May, Codeworks GameHorizon will next month hold Industry All-Stars, a series of inspirational talks from the makers of some of the most outstanding videogames produced in the UK.

Taking place from 1pm to 6pm on September 4th at the Sage Gateshead (*pictured above*), the event will be GameHorizon's final of 2007 and has been designed to be a positive celebration of the UK's talented independent studios.

Codeworks GameHorizon wants to ensure total relevancy for its speaker list, opting to use the shortlist for this year's Develop Industry Excellence Awards as a starting point. Codeworks expects some 100 developers to attend in order to discover how some of the most creative, commercial and critically successful games and businesses were built.

The event will be chaired by FreeStyleGames' Chris Lee who will himself present the introduction and a talk about his own company.

"Independent development is a pretty good place right now," said Lee. "In terms of independent versus in-house, and UK versus the rest of the world, we're actually punching well above our weight."

Nina Cliff, business development manager at GameHorizon, added: "The UK is a great place to make games and, without exception, this year the UK's studios have turned out some truly outstanding titles and pushed the boundaries of creativity.

"For our last big conference this year we wanted to end on a high note, so chose an All-Star theme to celebrate all that is good about UK game development."

www.gamehorizon.net/allstars

Games QA to get its own conference

The UK's annual QA testing conference is targetting games developers with a new one-day interactive media event that has already scored support from the likes of EA, Sega, Kuju and Babel.

Software & Systems Quality Conferences is hoping to reach out to studios and garner more support for its first games track on October 3rd.

The event promises a one-day exploration of QA and testing's position in the industry, discussing individual studios and publishers' testing methods and the latest technology.

"QA is no longer – and should not be – a part of games development that is overlooked," EA's QA director Chris Ambler explained to Develop. "We want the industry to understand that it's a key part of the process, and we also want to be able to develop better QA practices and techniques. This event will help achieve that."

The interactive media track is a larger part of the bigger SQS conference, which runs from October 2nd to 3rd at London's Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. Tutorials on the QA and testing field also run before and after the event, while an expo runs alongside the conference.

www.sqs-conferences.com

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD...

AUGUST 2007

SIGGRAPH
August 4th to August 9th
San Diego, USA
www.siggraph.org/s2007/
The digital arts event hits south California for another week with the dedicated 'Sandbox Symposium' running alongside. Develop will be there throughout: email Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk to arrange a meeting.

EDINBURGH INTERACTIVE FESTIVAL
August 12th to August 14th
Edinburgh, Scotland
edinburghinteractivefestilval.com
Hoping to put games culture on the map via a mix of speakers and lectures by reps hailing from across the games industry and converged media world.

GAMES CONVENTION
August 22nd to August 26th
Leipzig, Germany
www.gc-germany.de

GDC CHINA
August 27th to August 29th
Shanghai, China
www.gdcchina.cn
New show put together by CMP and IDC tailored for Chinese developers

SEPTEMBER 2007

INDUSTRY ALL-STARS
September 4th
The Sage Gateshead, Gateshead, UK
www.gamehorizon.net
Codeworks GameHorizon's celebration of the UK development industry features talks from *Develop* Award-nominated studios in a river Tyne-side setting.

AUSTIN GDC
September 5th to September 7th
www.austingame.com
Boasting three tracks dedicated to online games, audio for games and writing for games, plus a brand-new People's Choice track built from submitted proposals with the highest-ranked making the schedule.

TOKYO GAME SHOW
September 20th to September 23rd
tgs.cesa.or.jp
Japan's big yearly industry trade show, this year's iteration boasts the biggest ever international showing and two business-only days.

GAME CONNECTION ASIA
September 20th to September 21st
tgs.cesa.or.jp
The developer and publisher meeting event, popular at GDC and in its dedicated Lyon event in December, this year is running a dedicated two day event as part of the Tokyo Game Show, hoping to help Asian developers, publishers and service companes do business.

OCTOBER 2007

SQS
October 3rd
QE2 Conference Centre, London, UK
www.sqs-conferences.com
The yearly QA/Testing event targets the games industry for the first time with a one day exploration of QA and testing's position in the industry

E FOR ALL EXPO
October 18th to October 20th
Los Angeles Convention Center, USA
www.eforallexpo.com
IDG's take on E3 – but specifically this is a consumer show.

LONDON GAMES FESTIVAL
October 22nd to October 26th
www.londongamesfestival.co.uk
A week-long series of events designed to raise the profile of the games industry.

BAFTA GAMES AWARDS
October 23rd
Battersea Evolution, London, UK
www.bafta.org
The British Academy's take on a gong show, with a move to a bigger venue and renewed developer focus for 2007.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONTENT MARKET
October 23rd to October 24th
BAFTA, London, UK
www.tiga.org
A chance to meet potential collaborators and clients from other creative industries during the London Games Festival.

DECEMBER 2007

LYON GDC
December 3rd to December 6th
www.lyongdc.com
Game Connection and CMP team up to host 60 classes over a two-day period, running concurrently with the Game Connection 'business matchmaking' event in France.

FEBRUARY 2008

GDC 08
February 18th to 22nd
Moscone Centre, San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com
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THE DEALS

CODIES SIGN TO GAMETAP
Codemasters has made an exclusive deal with GameTap for digital distribution of both current titles and future projects. *Clive Barker's Jericho* and *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* will be available on the service on the same day they hit retail.

EPIC'S HEROIC DEEDS
Serious game studio Virtual Heroes has licenced Epic's Unreal Engine 3 to aid in development of realistic training simulation games.

MINDARK CRIES ENGINES
MMO developers MindArk have licenced Crytek's CryENGINE 2 for its virtual world *Entropia Universe*, which will be upgraded to the new engine by mid-2008.

TRAGNARION IS UNREAL
Epic has added another licensee to its roster with the news that Tragnario Studios is to base its new project, the multi-platform shooter *The Scourge Project*, on Unreal Engine 3 technology.

THE AMB-SIX
Philips' amBX ambient light, sound and airflow technology has six new partners, with Gearbox, Invictus Games, Brain in a Jar, Zombie, Riot Games and Instinct Techologies all signed on to add support in future titles.

STAR VAULTS TO NEXT-GEN
Another MMO is to be developed with Epic's UE3, as Swedish studio Star Vault licenses the engine to develop a next-generation massively multiplayer game.

MASSIVELY POPULAR
BioWare Austin has licensed Perpetual's online technology platform for the development of its first MMORPG. The middleware provides tools for player management, billing, lobby services and customer relationship management.

BIO BUYS MORE WARE
In another piece of middleware purchasing, BioWare Austin has integrated morpheme's animation solution into its pipeline for 'several unannounced next-gen titles.'

FAIRY SOFT HANS
Sega-owned Creative Assembly Australia has chosen Hansoft as its project management tool provider.

DEVELOPER CHART

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

JUNE 2007

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	STUDIO DETAILS		BEST SELLING GAME
1	NE	MICROSOFT (MICROSOFT)		FORZA MOTOSPORT 2 (XBOX)
2	▲ 3	NINTENDO		NINTENDO (WII)
3	▲ 13	EUROCOM ENTERTAINMENT		PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END (PS2, PS3, PSP, WII, XB360)
4	▲ 79	CRYSTAL DYNAMICS		TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY (PS2, PC)
5	▲ 37	CODEMASTERS		COLIN MCRAE: DIRT (XB360, PC)
6	▼ 5	EA CANADA		FIFA 07 (PS2, PSP, XB360, PC, XB, GC)
7	▼ 1	VICARIOUS VISIONS		SPIDER-MAN 3 (PS2, WII, DS)
8	■ 8	MAXIS		THE SIMS 2: H&M STUFF (PC)
9	▲ 20	NEXT LEVEL GAMES		MARIO STRIKERS CHARGED FOOTBALL (WII)
10	▼ 4	EA LA		COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS (XB360, PC)
11	▼ 7	UBISOFT (MONTREAL)		TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS (PS3, XB360, PC)
12	▼ 2	TREYARCH		SPIDER-MAN 3 (PS3, XB360)
13	▼ 6	KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT		PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6 (PS2, PSP, XB360, DS, PC)
14	▲ 16	AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT		PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END (DS)
15	▼ 9	EA REDWOOD SHORES		TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07 (PS3, XB360, WII, PSP, XB)
16	▼ 10	UBISOFT (FRANCE)		RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS (XB360, WII, PS2, DS, GBA)
17	▲ 44	EA UK		HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (PS2, PS3, WII, XB360, PC)
18	▲ 28	CAPCOM		RESIDENT EVIL 4 (WII, PS2, GC)
19	▼ 12	SONIC TEAM		SONIC AND THE SECRET RINGS (WII)
20	▼ 18	OFFICE CREATE		COOKING MAMA (DS, WII)

CHART KEY: ▲ UP ON LAST MONTH ▼ DOWN ON LAST MONTH ■ NO CHANGE IN POSITION **NE** NEW ENTRY ☐ INDEPENDENT STUDIO

CHART COMMENT

This month's chart reveals that Microsoft's internal team Turn 10 has helped the format holder jump straight to the top of the chart thanks to the release of *Forza 2* last month.

In comparison to last month's chart the ranking shows a number of independents doing the business at retail falling considerably, but those that are in the list have upped their game – with Eurocom in the UK (third in the chart) and Canada's Next Level Games (9th) presumably anticipating their next royalty statements thanks to the continued success and strong sales of franchise titles *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Mario Strikers*.

Nintendo, meanwhile, rises up to to second place in the chart after last months slip to third – but the studio has never been far from the top place since the roll out of the Wii. Slow-burn sales of Wii add-on games such as *Wii Play* continue to boost the coffers – something no doubt set to continue thanks to the recent release of *More Brain Training*.

Elsewhere, most notable risers are Crystal Dynamics and Codemasters. The former has raced to fourth from 79th thanks to Tomb Raider-remake *Anniversary*.

Arguably perhaps more impressive is *Colin McRae: DiRT's* fast-tracking Codemasters up to fifth place thanks to Xbox 360 software sales. The team's R&D investment in its Neon engine, showcased and debuted with *DiRT*, has clearly paid off and should set the studio in good stead as it moves all its internally developed next-gen games over the the middleware.

"The number of indies doing the business at retail is falling..."

ChartTrack

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Hitting Your Target

Unseen features in your game could help make it a big hit, says our pseudonymous design expert…

Every designer would like to design a hit game. It's desirable not only due to the financial benefits that follow, but also because of the industry respect and future design freedom it brings. But not every game can be a hit; indeed, not every game should even try to be a hit. And the first step in creating a hit is to define the proper metric of success for your existing design and then determining if a hit is possible, or even desirable.

A retail hit is not the only form of success in the game industry, it is merely the most visible measure of it. Not every well-known game makes money, and there are games you've never heard of that were more profitable than you would probably believe.

I've never had a retail 'megahit' myself, but I have designed games that have made significantly more profit than most of the top ten-selling games at the time.

And then there's the question of critical acclaim and reputation, which isn't much of a factor for beginning designers but is increasingly important to the more established and successful ones. The very best game designers are always focused on doing something genuinely new, different and entertaining; if they do it right, with proper regard for their target market, they know that the sales will be there, too.

Understanding what you are trying to do is the single most important aspect of the design process. It is alarming how many people in product development have literally no idea of what they want to do.

Earlier this week I received an email from a publishing executive who wanted to know if I might happen to have any ideas for a specific market segment they want to enter. This is neither the first time I've received such an email, nor will it be the last. As publishers seldom know specifically what they want to do, their primary focus is on determining what market space will give them the greatest revenue with the smallest development cost. This is why they are so interested in casual games right now, as the bang for the buck there is greater at the moment.

The challenge is that identifying a market opportunity and actually hitting it are two very different things, and most of the time the onus for hitting that target falls on you, the designer. This means that it is vital to understand the difference between the aspects of your design that will help you hit your target and those that will hinder your ability to do so. This does not mean that you should simply throw out every new, different and cool element and copy the market leader, that's a surefire way to limit yourself to a moderate sales ceiling as well as design mediocrity. The market limitations merely provide you with a set of borders within which you can innovate.

This can mean acknowledging the reality that massive amounts of gore which would go unremarked in a computer game might be unwise to include in a PlayStation title. It can mean leaving out that awesome idea for using voice recognition as a primary interface because the market penetration of headset microphones is not yet high enough. It can mean adding character development and RPG elements to a game originally conceived as a pure fighting game. Or, it can mean stripping out more complex elements in order to provide easier entry in a game that will be sold online.

I thought the most interesting thing about this month's interview with John Romero, an acquaintance since we were both working in different partnerships with Raven after the release of *Doom*, was learning how id's designs took deliberate advantage of what had initially been an accidental artifact of the *Wolfenstein 3D* technology. This is a brilliant example of how a game's design can be shaped to maximize both its gameplay as well as its market appeal.

The Alpenwolf *is a professional game designer who has been active in the industry for 17 years and designed games for some of the largest American and Japanese publishers. He has been known to visit Ironforge in the company of a large white wolf. design@alpenwolf.com.*

Q&A: John Romero

John Romero is the co-founder of legendary game developer id Software and the designer of genre-defining 3D action games *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom*, *Heretic* and *Quake*. He is currently designing a massive multiplayer online game with his new games development house, Slipgate Ironworks.

Do you think *Wolfenstein 3D* was one of the first games to incorporate emotion into gaming?
Emotion?

Fear is an emotion.
With *Wolfenstein*, the fear came out of the way the game was being designed. We weren't trying to elicit fear at first, the motivation was to make the player feel successful and powerful, we wanted him to have a great time. But as we were developing the game, the way we made the AI technology work, we designed kind of an interesting way of helping the AI by using sound zones. We made use of that in *Doom* and other games use it now, but prior to that most games used the monster's point-of-view.

In *Wolf* we wanted to not only have that point-of-view reaction, but we wanted to activate enemy AI with sound. Every room had a fill zone, so if you were looking at the map you'd see it marked with different colors indicating different zones. A room would have a different color than the adjacent hallway, so when you opened the door, it would flood fill the colors together into one sound zone.

That made things start getting scarier; you had to start thinking about the consequences of your actions and anticipate the reactions to them. We were doing things to make the AI cooler, but this also started to make the game scarier.

In looking back, what happened in the process of making the game was that we ended up modeling it after the original game [*Castle Wolfenstein* by Muse Software, the popular Apple II game that served as the inspiration for Wolfenstein 3D]. One of the coolest things was that the original was scary, especially when the SS were following you from room to room. When the SS came in after you

and there was this digitized sound sample –

'Schweinhund!'
Yeah, we wanted that. We weren't trying to focus on fear, but it became scary when we tried to recreate that sense of being a prisoner trying to escape.

So in Wolf, the inclusion of emotion was somewhat accidental and stemmed mostly from the technology, but in *Doom* you were playing upon the player's fear. That was obviously intentional.
I think we took it to another level with *Doom*. If we modeled *Wolf* after the original, which inspired some fear, then *Doom* was modeled after *Aliens*, which of course was very scary. By the time we got to doing *Quake*, we had basically come to understand that fear was a great component of

"You shouldn't just try to stretch the gameplay with cinematics..."

our games. And with *Quake*, we tried to pull the horror from a different direction, we were using a more psychological, Lovecraftian kind of fear in that one. That was more disturbing and visceral than the fear inspired by *Doom*.

We took that concept right down to the graphic level. If you look at games nowadays, even compared to *Quake* running at 640, it looks and feels very different than all the new and shiny 3D stuff. It looks dirty, even the environment creeps you out.

How will game designers inspire emotional reactions from players in the future?
Fear is really primal. More complex emotions require higher brain functions and it takes more design support to trigger that sort of thing. Love, for example, takes a lot more character development.

So really, triggering the base instinct stuff is what we can do now. Messing with more complex emotions is easier in other mediums because they're more limited than games, you know, movies and books aren't interactive. To do it in an interactive medium, you'd have to focus on it. It would be difficult. A studio that's been around for a long time with a set team, a designer with a clear path and serious resources would be one of the few that could go forward with something like that. You know, with goals like: 'I want the player to fall in love.' Or 'I want the player to cry when this character gets wiped out.'

Your terminology betrays your orientation towards the base instinct stuff.
[*laughs*] 'It was so sad when his skull got fucking vaporised!'

Does scripted gameplay of the sort seen in *Half-Life* and *Halo* offer the possibility for more emotional involvement on the part of the player?
Scripting definitely offers a way towards that kind of thing. But second-by-second gameplay is really important. You shouldn't just try to stretch the gameplay with cinematics because the non-player characters are traveling with you and their fate is wrapped up with yours. What happens to them should have a greater effect on you. You should have to care for them. Actually, that was one thing I was trying to do with *Daikatana*, you had to work with the secondary characters to keep them in the game and if they died the game was over. Unfortunately, the code wasn't supportive of that level of involvement.

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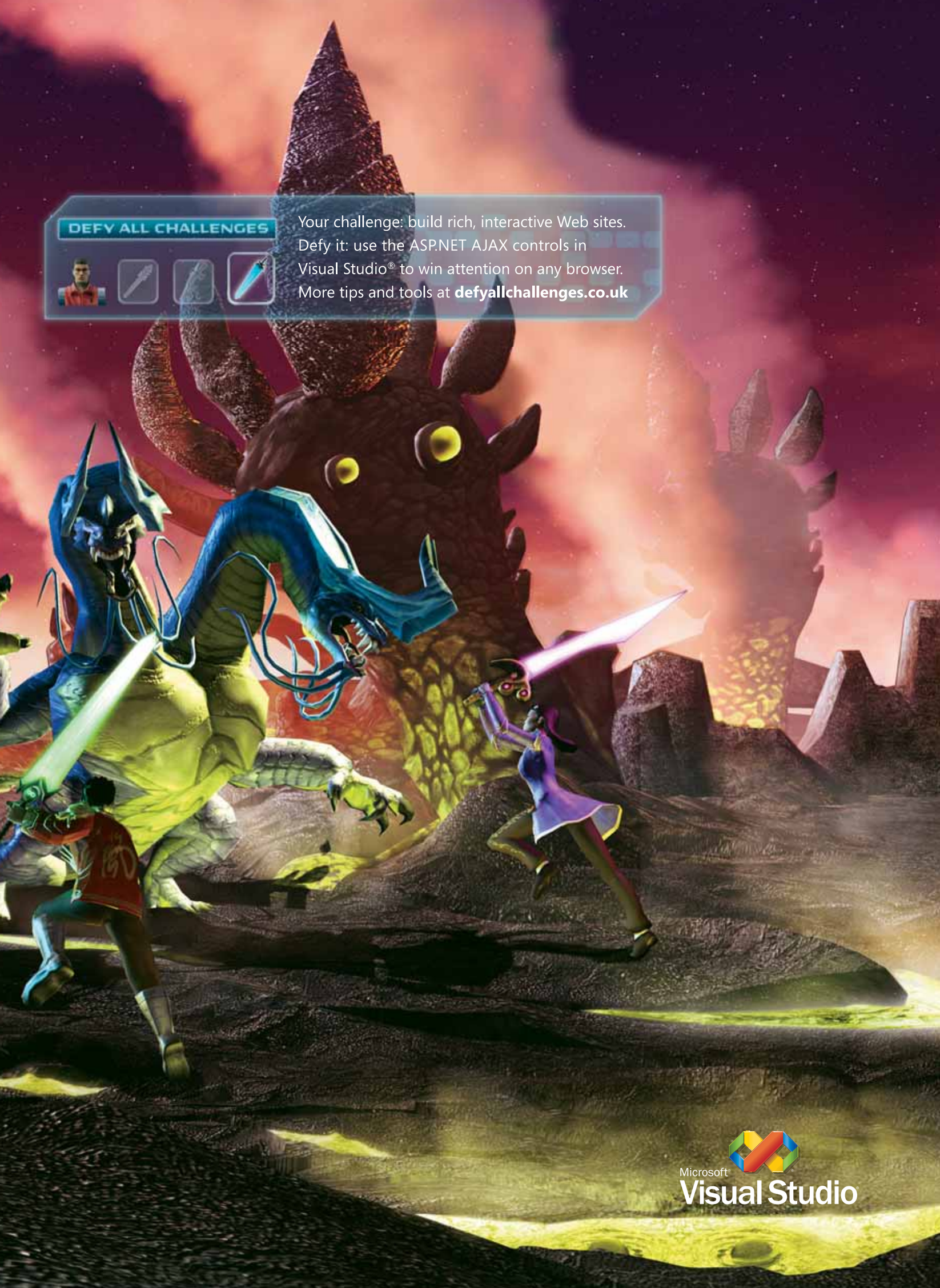
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VARIABLE DECLARTIONS

by Owain Bennallack

Game for experimentation

ARE DEVELOPERS READY TO try again when it comes to storytelling and emotion or are we already at the end of the road?

Every so often, a successful movie throws out the Three Act cookie cutter behind nearly all great and not-so-great Hollywood movies: *Pulp Fiction*, *Adaptation*, *Memento* and *Irreversible* are examples from the past decade or so.

That 'or so' is no accident – *Pulp Fiction* hails from 1994. The fact I've reached so far back demonstrates how rarely films perform the trick, and how unruffled movie-making is afterwards. Tarantino's non-linear narrative didn't spawn a wave of movies that played with the conventions of cinema; the biggest movie of recent years is the *Lord of the Rings*, an engrossing nine-hour trilogy of getting from A to B one step at a time.

Comparisons with games and movie-making only stretch so far, but my point is cinema has apparently reached some sort of technological and artistic steady state with respect to narrative. Special effects may improve, but the storytelling toolkit seems established.

Have games yet reached this point? Instinctively, no – games are barely out of short trousers in comparison with other artforms. What's more, developers remain constrained by technology, and probably always will be due to a real-time medium's near-infinite capacity to simulate, and to respond to stimuli. More powerful hardware doesn't just enable artists to think up more complicated 3D character models – it enables those characters to better approximate thinking.

Okay… but doesn't progress feel slow? In comparison graphical advances in the 1990s and multiplayer more recently, the pace of change in game storytelling recalls Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The tree we sit under grows ever more realistic – perhaps rendered cheaply with off-the-shelf middleware – but we continue to watch the road in vain for characters we can truly believe in and care about.

Last month's Develop in Brighton conference saw several big name sessions touch on this theme, daring attendees to aim higher when it comes to pushing gamers' non-plastic buttons.

"Games are barely out of short trousers…"

Richard Garriott's keynote on MMOG stagnation was wide-ranging, but his introduction most relevant here. Garriott pointed out that ever since his first title, 1980's Akalabeth, gaming has followed a pattern whereby the advances made in game innovation are effectively reset by new hardware, when developers realise they can remake the same maze game again with better graphics. To extend Garriott's observation, the hardware cycle isn't an enabler of new game experiences then, but arguably part of the problem.

David Braben's talk on making next generation games looked more positively at the potential of technology. But he once again made parallels with Hollywood – asking when we'd see a Hitchcock or Welles of gaming – and argued that true 'fifth generation' games would be distinguished by empathy, emotion and emergent behaviour and story-telling, rather than by massive numbers of facially distinct on-screen characters or other technical waypoints.

Masahiro Mori's '*Uncanny Valley*' could not be crossed in games only with better graphics, said Braben – indeed, such fidelity can be an obstacle, distracting us from the techniques for creating an empathetic response long ago discovered by animators. (Equally, many of us will recall thinking ourselves fully-qualified space pirates after losing ourselves for hours in Braben's black-and-white *Elite*.)

Braben then showed how NPCs in Frontier's *The Outsider* will remember your previous actions and change their behave as well as responding to conversational cues, and argued that story could emerge from such moments, just as people remember the great bits of *Star Wars*, rather than the line-by-line exposition.

The implicit suggestion is that computer and video games will need to find their own way of eliciting emotion and empathy. Rather than waiting for some breakthrough title to deliver an eight-hour scripted blockbuster, our best hope is that small advances in the apparatus of non-linear storytelling eventually provide the tools to better engage all gamers.

Peter Molyneux hinted at such a new departure in his talk through *Fable 2*. What if rather than dying when you mess-up, you could be shamed into wanting to avoid a kicking? If instead of three strikes and you're out, you had to endure humiliation at the hands of in-game ruffians – and carry the scars with you in-game forever, just as Bruce Willis never dies in the *Die Hard* movies, but we can feel his wincing every step of the way?

It sounds a modest proposal, but it quietly dismantles one of the longest-standing conventions in computer and video games.

Much more of that will needed if developers are to prove we don't yet know what games can do.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of Develop. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at MCV and Edge, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the Develop conference advisory board.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

by Nick Gibson

The changing face of games hardware

IN AN INDUSTRY WHERE change is continual, there has been one constant for decades – new generations of console arriving every five to six years, stimulating waves of investment and innovation. But there are signs that this predictable tidal motion of investment in technology, with console releases largely synchronised with a market leader and consumer sales surging to heady peaks and perilous troughs, might be disrupted next time. Signs of climate change abound.

BLU MOVE

Sony's multi-billion dollar investment in Blu-ray and Cell, the high starting price point of PS3 and longer expected sales curve, SCE's financial impact on Sony Corp and the metaphoric seppuku of Ken Kutaragi suggest that replicating such investment next time will be at least difficult if not economically unsustainable. The traditionally long PlayStation shelf-lives, which offset earlier loss-making years, could be elongated even further for PS3 as Sony seeks to recoup its record initial investment from a market it no longer dominates.

It is clear that the difference between PS3 and its successor won't be as dramatic as last time: a viable new HD format is unlikely for the foreseeable future, and semi-conductor limitations continue to deliver increasing complexity and diminishing returns in processing power. *God of War 2*, possibly PS2's best game yet, arrived seven years after the console's launch; getting the best out of PS3 may take just as long.

Future Sony generations will be more iterative and evolutionary than the last revolution, and Sony's cycles will not dictate the industry's pattern of growth as they have in the past.

Nintendo's Wii is a cheaper, less advanced and more accessible platform for all concerned. The Wii is not a fad that will peter out like the GameCube, but nor will it, in our view, reach PlayStation longevity. Nintendo has been unafraid to rebase its addressable market regularly, having released four different handheld platforms in seven years. It's even possible Nintendo's management may be tempted to bring a higher power, competitively priced Wii 2 to the market just as PlayStation 3 comes within reach of the mass market.

The tidy procession of this generation has already been disrupted by Microsoft's relatively early launch. Microsoft is looking for measures to keep its lead.

18 months after launching 360, the souped-up Elite is already on the market, faster than other console hardware revamps historically, suggesting an accelerated and more iterative cycle. The technology inside PlayStation 3 probably has years more shelf-life than its equivalent inside the 360. Growing pressure on DVD's capacity to store today's huge games might in a few years force Microsoft to turn to HD-DVD as a games medium, which would effectively dissect its market, resulting in further cycle disruption.

While Microsoft will no doubt support 360 longer than Xbox, it's already out of sync with Sony and Nintendo, and there's every chance it will speed 360's successor to again win a perceived timing advantage over Sony.

Nintendo has increased pressure on competitors to reach new audiences, a call which Sony has already successfully, and Microsoft largely unsuccessfully, heeded. 360 seems stuck with hardcore branding and software, classic old-school interfaces, and marketing which sidelines the mass market as the wives and sisters of its primary hardcore audience. Breaking out of that silo will prove difficult and as the market moves on, pressure on Microsoft to reinvent its console to become more mass-market friendly will build.

Evidence of this changing climate is already emerging. This cycle has proven unique thus far, with a radically changed market prospects for each manufacturer, Sony in the unfamiliar position of playing catch-up and with studios and publishers forced to support a far larger number of commercially viable games platforms than before.

"Each console manufacturer's cycle looks to become increasingly out of sync with each other..."

CRITICAL MASS MARKET

Though still driven by hard-nosed decisions based on software attach rates and sales momentum, each console manufacturer's cycle looks likely to become increasingly out of sync with each other, characterised by smaller iterative releases. This may well result in easier technology learning curves, smaller hardware cycles, less pronounced industry cyclicality and smoother industry growth overall.

However, for publishers this changing ecosystem questions the viability of major cross-platform releases for an increasingly fragmented market. Conserving R&D resources will become increasingly important as the industry's seasons are disrupted

Nick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries www.gamesinvestor.com

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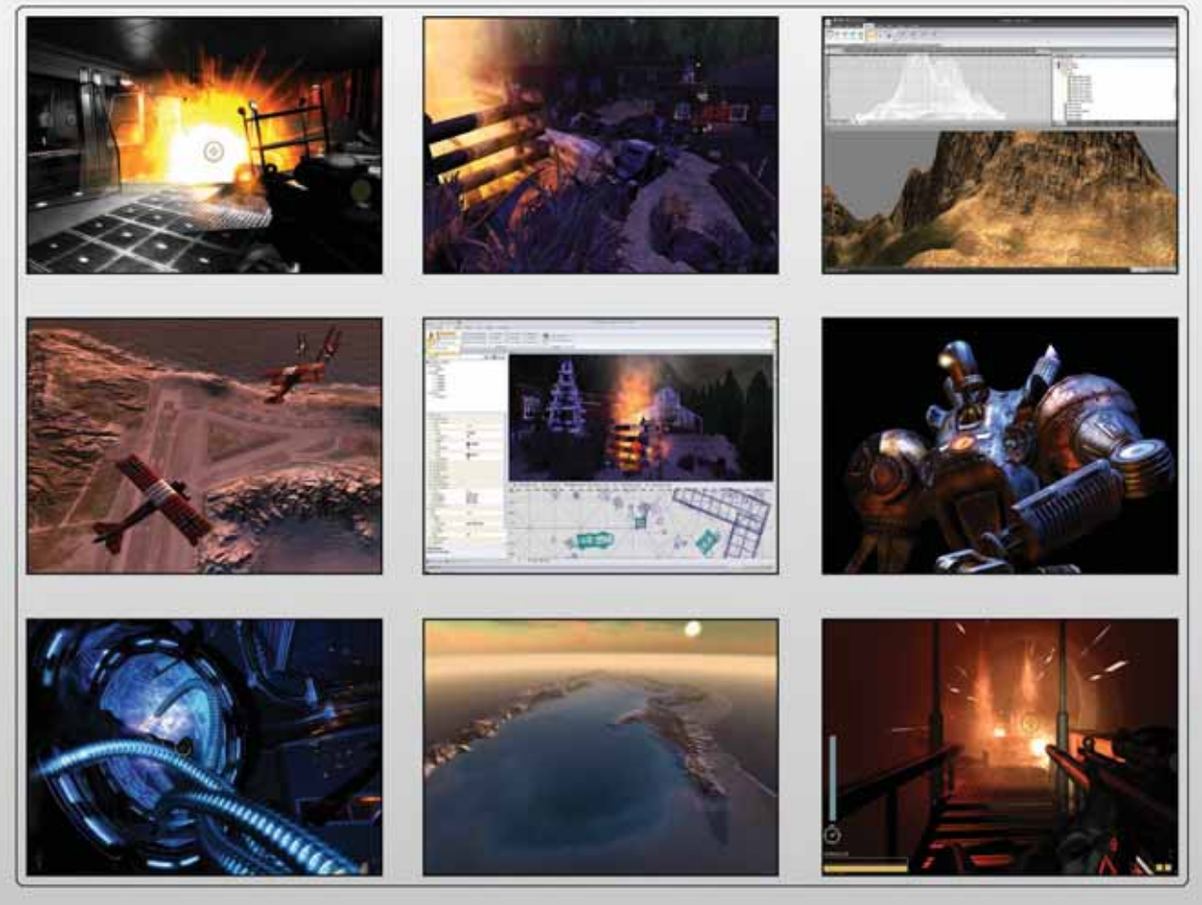

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In a demonstration reel created by Image Metrics to show off its video game facial animation performance capture, model building and rigging technology, Ilana Rogel, an actress, gives life to an avatar also named Ilana.

'It's also far easier on the actors. Instead of being painted with a chemical or covered in sensors, they need only do what they would ordinarily do: act'

New York Times

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"Fuck milestones!"
Gordon Hall, Rockstar Leeds, p26

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The Prize is Right

Develop Awards: The winners, p31

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Rockstar Leads

...and everyone follows? Michael French talks to Rockstar Leeds boss Gordon Hall to find out more about the Develop Award-winning team's first ten years of business, and plans for the future...

By Develop's reckoning, Rockstar Leeds is one of the most profitable studios on the planet.

Since 2005 it has created six games for its headline-dominating parent company Rockstar Games – with its *Grand Theft Auto Liberty City Stories* and *Vice City Stories* titles being bestsellers on PSP and PS2.

When you look at the amount of games sold versus number of staff (the headcount currently stands at 70 having grown steadily since its founding in 1997 and acquisition by Rockstar in 2004), its staff probably have a higher per capita value of any other third-party studio from around the world.

But how did a team of upstarts that at one point worked on a *Barbie Horse Adventures* GBA game become one of the world's most profitable studios working on the most recognised contemporary games franchise?

Co-founder and studio head Gordon Hall knows the answer – so we caught up with him at the Develop conference, just a day after Rockstar Leeds took home the *Develop* Award for best handheld studio, to find out.

So it's the studio's tenth birthday this year – run us through how you got to where you are now.

Well, I started out creating games when I was quite young at 14 or 15, but I left the games industry as someone told me 'don't bother with that, go and get a proper job'. I was tempted back when a friend I had made games as a youngster started a company called Twilight which then became Hookstone. I started as a programmer with an eye on the business side, but it soon turned out when I joined that the business didn't have long left to live.

So I teamed up with some of the other guys to form Mobius – and it wasn't easy trying to prove ourselves at that time. We went about 16 months without a salary until we signed a game and realised that we worked well as a small team, and that best suited handheld games, so we made sure we did some different titles to establish our name.

At the same time, we wanted to think ahead, so we sectioned a group of the team off and looked at the market to see what would happen in a few years time. About five years ago we thought it would be a 'GameCube in your hand'-style machine and that Nintendo would be first with the high-powered handheld, so we wrote an engine for it before it ever existed, in order to make sure we were there first – but of course it never happened.

> ***"Rockstar introduced us to a model of gaming that we had never seen before..."***

What happened instead was Sony announced the PSP and we had everything ready for those comparable tech specs and just went from there. Things went ballistic going from a studio comfortably turning over about a million pounds a year to, pretty much overnight, a studio being offered every franchise on the planet, and three publishers suddenly wanted to acquire us, and another two wanted to team up to keep us independent.

Rockstar were one of the ones who wanted to acquire us – we had just been working on *Max Payne* GBA for them, and that introduced us to a model of gaming that we had never seen before - a 'balls to the wall, work your tits off because it's worth it if you get it right, gameplay first' approach where everyone at Rockstar from your senior producer right up to Sam Houser were looking at your game, playing it and commenting on it. That was really unique for us and compared to how the rest of the industry handles itself, it just felt right.

It must have been a pretty easy decision?

Well, when it came to the crunch, we let the staff decide – we had 37 or so guys at that time and we laid out what the possibilities were and asked what we should do. Although, in all honestly, I did lay it on a bit thicker on the Rockstar side because the idea of working on a smaller number of games with those guys really appealed and meant we could focus on quality.

Plus, out of all those interested in us, Rockstar didn't want us to expand to 200 quickly – one of the deals we were being offered was for eight PSP games a year for one publisher, which is great on paper, but means less love from the publisher and a bloody hard slog to get those games done. So we joined Rockstar.

The big surprise came when Sam said he wanted us to do *GTA*. The game had never been done outside of Rockstar North, and I remember a pause in the meeting when, for a second he thought we weren't interested – we were so stunned he thought the silence meant we didn't care. Of course: we did care!

Did you feel you had to prove yourselves as newcomers to a set of studios that already had a strong reputation?

Absolutely. Games take a long time to make – when you make one you give up 18 months of your life, and that's a long time. Some games now are being made on a four-year life cycle – that frightens the fuck out of me because that's a huge chunk of your life. So one thing we'd always had done, before Rockstar, was always take a step back and play our games to make sure they remain fun to play.

When we were given *GTA* we realised we had to do the same, but just take it to the next level. So the big thing for us was multiplayer. *GTA* never did multiplayer on a console, and our team lives and dies on the calibre of our guys, and we realised that if we could get a prototype of multiple players in three months, then we could offer something fresh to the series. We really pushed that hard – and it didn't work for some time, it was a struggle – but the minute we had a breakthrough, and half the studio is sat there playing the game's 'defend the base' mode, enjoying the new idea we have brought to this amazing series, we knew we'd made it.

In terms of it being a 'struggle' and having only that short period of time to get that feature working – did it put much pressure on the team?
Well on the first game, I admit we worked some long hours. It wasn't imposed – it was self-inflicted because we wanted to make a big name for ourselves. But the truth is there is only a small difference between working your balls off to make a good game, and working your balls off to make the best game in the world – that extra bit of effort can really pay off. Luckily, Rockstar understands that and recompenses its staff accordingly.

Is that the Rockstar ethos then?
Totally, it's very much 'prove yourself, make it count, don't leave anything on the table – and, by God, you will be looked after if you do that'. When you hear him [Sam Houser] say it, you know it's from the heart. And we know it's an attitude that works as Rockstar games do well. I've heard some people say Rockstar's success lies in sales and marketing, and promotion - it's not just those things: the core is making games that people give a fuck about playing.

"Fuck milestones. Forget thinking about what the guy who signs the cheques thinks and focus on the gameplay…"

Every week we look at the game and ask ourselves 'is it fun? is it playable?' it's a very rinse and repeat approach – the team has to keep replaying it to know the game, make sure it is fun, know what needs to be done to make it even better. The idea is to make a game so good that someone would want to steal it if they couldn't afford it, not care about milestones.

The worst thing to hear another developer say is 'Oh, I'm working towards our latest milestone'. Fuck milestones! What you want to care about is the end result; ask if your average consumer, who is only going to be buying a handful of games a year, will want to play it.

Make a game your own, and forget thinking what the guys who signs the milestone cheques thinks, focus on the game and what the person playing it at the end will think. It's not worth thinking about games development any other way.

I know I'm privileged, and that our team is lucky enough to have the best franchise in the world to riff on, but I think it's a rule for everyone – I think it's worked for us given how we've used the *Stories* label to create a subtly different slant on the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise.

So what's next for the studio?
We're currently at 70 guys, but are now growing. Until now we've been very focused and quite closed off, rarely interviewing and hiring – we have a very slow hire process, because we look for the right people and want those that fit with the culture and the team. But are expanding: we're going to take up more space in the office block we are based in. There's the capacity to have 40 more staff, but I only want to take on about 25 at most.

What about new games?
We're just finishing off *Table Tennis*, which is a lovely product to work on – I think it's really found its home on Wii.

After that we're going to be branching out further into next-gen – we've done original work on an existing franchise, but now we want to work on new IPs, and are looking at what we can do on Xbox 360 and PS3 for original products. But to succeed on those formats you've got to put everything into it or step away – we're already lucky to have a really committed team, so I think from that we will step up to become an established Rockstar studio known for original projects. It's not over for handheld for us – there's more coming there – but our new focus will be on the new formats. I'm also very inspired by PlayStation Network and Xbox Live Arcade – it's currently untapped for us, and is a field the whole world overall has overlooked.

One idea we are talking about that I can't talk too much about is something we've discussed with Sam Houser a lot, and when we talk about the concept – which is just a postage stamp sized idea at the moment, it's not in production yet – just makes us crack up laughing. It's an idea that the New York team came up with and which then evolved as we discussed it with them; it's a short development cycle, just 18 months, and it really excites me. But you know what we're like – we don't say anything concrete about a game until a few months before release, so that's all I can say.

Has that gameplay-focused production method surprised any of those newcomers?
Yes. One of the things we're trying to teach people is that, yes, next-gen gives you more polys to play with, more processing powers for physics, and it means more staff – if you want it to – but more polygons, better resolution, better physics can't guarantee good gameplay. Good gameplay comes from the joypad.

One of the things I notice with new staff when they join us is that they feel they have to

spend ages sat at their desk adding content, but not playing the game at all. I'm much happier if someone sat at their desk with their feet up replaying a small piece of code over and over for six hours rather than continually working and not playing, because that iterative experience reveals so many things that a polished but untested game can't show you. For me, the best position for my guys to be is with their hands on a joypad rather than on a keyboard. If they play the game as much as they work, I'm happy as I know that will mean a good game. But none of our new starters ever think like that when they first arrive.

Why do you think that is?

The culture in the industry for too long has been a horrendous 'Why aren't you working? Why are you on the internet?' attitude - but behaving like that stamps out creativity. I think it is an attitude slowly changing, however, because ten years ago the people at the top didn't play games – now people that play and understanding *playing* are getting to the top, this is one of the things I really like about Rockstar.

Looking back over the past few years, Leeds has worked on games for the teams at Rockstar

"I think the games industry should rally behind us, because there will come a time when we'll all have an idea that is a little edgy and we need to have the freedoms to express it..."

North, San Diego, Toronto – you seem to be a bit of a hub for all the other studios. Is that a fair assumption?

Yes, and I think what has put us in that position is our great team, and their ability to develop initial concepts quickly. They're amazing guys - they got the code from *GTA III*, *Vice City* and *San Andreas* up and running on the PSP in just weeks. It's phenomenal. As I've said, we work hard and fast – the guys like to get code and get it running, without tarting it up, just to prove things are possible, and that's what's put us in such a good position. You can polish once the thing is fun.

From that vantage point, and given that the studio has contributed to Rockstar's slate of 18-rated games, did the recent action over *Manhunt 2* effected how Leeds and the other Rockstar studios go about producing their games?

Well, on that point, I've got to say I really feel for the London team – they've done a cracking job and made a great game.

I like the game for what it is – and I was a big fan of *Manhunt* before we joined Rockstar, and I was actually a bigger fan of it more than I was of *GTA* – I like where it placed you in the world and the questions it asked of the world. *Manhunt 2* is no different to the first in terms of content, it's just that times seem to have changed and they've changed against this type of game. But if you look at a film like *Man Bites Dog*, it makes *Manhunt* look tame in comparison, but that film can be bought by anyone aged 18.

Was there a feeling amongst the Rockstar studios that the company was being singled out?

I don't think Rockstar specifically has been picked on, but I do think that the wider issue attacks our entire industry. We need to teach people that games are an art form – they are more artistic than film.

I think the games industry should rally behind us, because there will come a time when we'll all have an idea that's a little edgy, and we need to have the freedoms to express it.

We are an adult entertainment industry – we may have started out with child-like technology making games solely for a younger audience, but it's just not like that anymore. It might take legislature a little while to catch up, but if the industry sticks together hopefully we can change people's attitudes quicker.

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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

'And the winners are...'

Last month 500 games development professionals crowded into Brighton's Metropole Hotel to see which studios scooped the big prizes in the Develop Awards. It was the event's biggest turnout ever, and 17 different companies took home prizes. Here's our round-up of the winners and pictures from the event…

SPECIAL INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

DEVELOPMENT LEGEND
Ian Hetherington

GRAND PRIX
Sony Computer Entertainment

CREATIVITY

NEW CONSOLE/PC IP
MotorStorm (Evolution/SCEE External Development)

BEST USE OF A LICENCE
Lego Star Wars II (Traveller's Tales)

NEW HANDHELD IP
Crush (Zoë Mode)

VISUAL ARTS
Rare (*Viva Piñata*)

AUDIO ACCOMPLISHMENT
FreeStyle (*B-Boy*)

PUBLISHING HERO
Sega

realtime worlds
CRACKDOWN
Winner of Two Develop Awards 2007
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Realtime Worlds (*Crackdown*)

BEST HANDHELD STUDIO
Rockstar Leeds

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Blitz

INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER
Traveller's Tales

IN-HOUSE DEVELOPER
Ubisoft France

COVER STARS

Attendees to the Awards had the chance to star on their own personalised cover of *Develop*. Here's some of the best – the rest will be availble to view on developmag.com soon…

DEVELOP AWARDS 2007
Category: Creativity - New handheld/mobile IP
Winner: CRUSH, Zoë Mode

Zoë Mode

codemasters congratulates
all the category winners

hope you had a great night!

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to all who voted for us

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Second COMING

Michael French presents a summary of the best of Brighton from the 2007 Develop conference…

Okay, so we're probably a little biased, but last month's Develop conference and expo proved that Europe's game developers now have a key yearly event that provides not just a focal meeting point, but true food for thought as well.

Year one was very much a proving ground, introducing many people to the idea that this city on the south UK coast – which a number of development companies already called home – could host developers from across the country and around the world. Looking back, the sessions were a snapshot of the industry on the cusp of next-gen realisation – in comparison year two's line-up provided real relevance.

Most refreshing was the relaxed attitude of the delegates. Some of the industry's most prominent speakers were as keen to participate in lively sessions – such as Buzz: The Video Game, which tested their games knowledge (above left), or Game Design Room 101 (above right) – as they were to discuss the nitty gritty of middleware or listen to impassioned talks about online

ONLINE ORATION

While the quality talks varied greatly in scope – during one hour Molyneux talked design, while Rare outlined its artistic vision behind *Viva Pinata* next door, all while the audio track continued apace down the hall. Connected games and communities was the prevalent theme in a number of key sessions. Keynote speakers Richard Garriott from NCsoft and XNA boss Chris Satchell – both of them ex-pats returning to home to talk of what they had learnt working in America, coincidentally – and even Nokia's Martin O'Driscoll, telling attendees that the future of games lay online.

Sure, we've heard that one before, and the punchline is that it's developers who will reap the benefits. But whereas GDC 07 outlined this in broad, theoretical strokes, speakers at Develop were prepared to put their money where their mouth was, and offer tangible direction or examples on what's in store.

Garriott, for instance, said that MMO design had stalled since he created *Ultima Online* and contemporaries devised *EverQuest* – frustrating for a genre so young. "We owe it to consumers to provide new kinds of gameplay," he said, implying that, if left to grind and level up, MMO communities will vanish as quickly as they have arrived.

Satchell was keen to pick up that baton later on in discussing how Web 2.0 for other static mediums had evolved rapidly, to the point where communities can use Microsoft's own Popfly application to mix and mashup photos, videos, text and sound. The next step, he said, was for games to do the same thing, conceeding that XNA is just a small step in this direction.

More interesting, was his warnings on the issues related to user-generated content such as IP rights, censorship and offensive material.

These matters tend to be absent from many of the wider talks about Web 2.0 and games (or as Satchell has also been referring to its as – Games 3.0), and while the XNA boss made it clear there were no easy answers, that they were addressed and outlined so clearly really summed up the key thing about the conference.

While other more established events offer a platform for new announcements, Develop as a conference seems to at least provide a genuine place to talk through the actual ramifications of what they may mean, making it a key place to get the games development community together to have ideas formed and thoughts provoked.

www.develop-conference.com

Turn over for photos and key speaker quotes from the conference.

"Focus on gameplay, not gimmicks..."

Not original, but always some of the best advice on games design, here delivered by Glu Mobile's head of development Chris White

"Nintendo has functioned as the unofficial R&D team for the whole industry for the past few years..."

Stuart Dredge looks at emerging trends in mobile games

"The ROI on Alkabeth was infinite and it's been downhill ever since..."

Richard Garriott recounts his career in MMOs. His first game made him $150,000 profit in 1979

"For every Manic Miner there were at least ten Horace Goes Skiing..."

Frontier's David Braben said that to innovate you had to accumulate in his talk on game design

"Let's exhibit the leadership before another medium starts to take that away from us..."

XNA General Manager Chris Satchell urges developers to think more about online communities

"There are too many complex games. I wanted to make a game that appealed to people who didn't play games..."

LocoRoco creator Tsutomu Kouno

"Developers who use middleware can't be cutting edge if they are relying on other people's technology..."

Rebellion CTO Chris Kingsley

"Developers have got to think of something new..."

Eidos' creative director Ian Livingstone successfully lobbied to have 'Nazis' as a game device consigned to Room 101

"Royalties are extremely rare in the industry..."

Games Investor Consulting analyst (and Develop contributor) Rick Gibson offers some stark truths about the competitive nature of the UK market

FOR THE FULL STORY BEHIND EACH OF THESE COMMENTS, CHECK OUT OUR IN-DEPTH EVENT COVERAGE AT WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM

Getting out of the ghetto

Sick of duff deals with publishers and a frustration with how independent studios were treated, Gusto Games wanted a change – and, MD Simon Phillips tells Michael French, the studio has found an unlikely saviour in the children's book industry…

The team at Gusto Games are probably the first to admit that they are somewhat overlooked on the UK development scene. Although profitable and working on some big games – it placed a comfortable 62nd in this year's *Develop 100* thanks to its work on *Championship Manager* for Eidos – the studio is very much an under the radar operator.

You know the name, but not what they do – probably not the intention the team of friends that came together from the rubble of Kaboom when the studio was formed a few years ago.

That is starting to change, however. As Developmag.com revealed at the end of last month, the studio has signed a trend-bucking deal with children's book publisher Scholastic to develop games based on literary properties. It's a deal which effectively sidesteps publishers, and it's not the only one Gusto has signed either, thanks to growing activity in the online space.

Simon Phillips (centre) with former Tomb Raider developers Richard Morton and Tom Scutt

So how did the deal with Scholastic come around?

Working in sports games for us meant a double edged sword – few people made sports games outside of EA, which was a great specialisation. Yet we were the only one who made sports games, which meant people were often unsure of us.

So we started looking at other routes to non-sports products – and from that we got talking to a number of property owners such as film companies and IP owners. For Scholastic specifically we met them through a screenwriter who was speaking to our chairman and said that Scholastic was trying to get into games.

Talking to them, Scholastic understood that we had a problem in how people perceived us, where we were and where we wanted to go.

Why are they going direct to a development company rather than licensing their property out to a publisher?

They were looking for something tangible like Gusto that they could give direction to, but which would provide direct feedback and also understood the business they wanted to get into.

It sounds like there were some shared frustrations. Was there a meeting of minds between your people and their people?

Scholastic's in a similar position to us – the company was stung before by just licensing out all the products to big publishers, much in the way we were when dealing with publishers. There's no control, and when the products are crap no one takes the flak.

"The demographics for Nintendo's machines are perfect for Scholastic's properties..."

So what games are you making with Scholastic?

Scholastic has a new brand – they want to relaunch it with a cross-media push across books, films, games, cartoons, and the likes. That's really all I can say for now. But we've assembled a team to suit the property, and in the first instance they'll only be making the games for the Wii and DS. The game itself is an adventure game – when we worked that out and went looking for people who had similar strengths, and found the team from Core that worked on *Tomb Raider* were looking to try something new.

Why focus on Wii and DS?

Originally Scholastic wanted us to make games for anything that loaded. They were interested in PS3, PSP, and want to stretch to mobile and iDVD. But we said hang on, if you want to make a PSP and a Wii version you'll devalue the Wii one without a focused control system – and the demographic for the Nintendo machines is perfect for Scholastic's properties. So we're focusing on Nintendo and may consider doing ports further on.

Dealing direct with Scholastic isn't the first of this kind of deal: other UK independents have worked with Burger King and Red Bull – have you have you been inspired by their activity?

So many people have had a hard time with publishers lately that this means we can do what we want to. I think it means we've all got more options – although this is a traditional distribution deal through retail, we're now getting in contact with people that have these

GOLF GETS GROOVY

Alongside the Scholastic deal, Gusto has started working in Canadian company Groove on its Skillground.com gaming and gambling site. Gusto's *Ultimate Tour Golf* is in fact the first original game for the site which currently runs versions of games like Codemasters' *TOCA* on its play-to-win service.

"Groove moves at a totally different pace to Scholastic," says Phillips. "It's been great to have a non-traditional online game launch – we can code right up to the end. The business model allows us to get on with more work after the game is out as well."

Plus, Gusto has been pushing its golf technology into serious games territories as well, recently exhibiting a modified version of its game as a training title with medical technology firm Merck. The game lets medical players play a round of golf, asking them taxing questions between shots.

It's just another piece of evidence that games developers can find decent partnerships outside of the traditional games market, says Phillips: "It's a fantastic thing that's happening on the commercial side of games where the number of opportunities for us outside of the games industry.

"Working with people outside of the games industry is such a positive thing – you learn how they handle their markets and sectors and how these industries with much more history behave."

big brands in other fields, only to find they have similar problems.

Plus, as an independent we're now in a good position where we can step back and remain focused and make creative decisions – it's something we wouldn't have been able to do with a publisher.

How does the creative process with Scholastic differ to one with a publisher?

They understand their brand, but don't understand video games so much – which means our relationship is actually very good.

They've taken on board a lot of our feedback about the characters in this new property and how they may be portrayed in a game, which is invaluable to them and should feed back into the books and movies which you just don't get when people licence these things elsewhere.

They've involved us in a lot of decisions, from the launch plans of the whole franchise right down to the colour of the main characters' shoes. And they actually seem to appreciate it when we say 'oh, that's rubbish – it won't work in games like that'. And of course it helps that we've got the core team from *Tomb Raider* working with us – that reassures them that we all know what we're doing

Their sincerity and honesty is quite endearing. They've laid it out for us saying 'This is what we've got, this is what we want to do, how can you help us?' And we've been similarly honest – we don't know book publishing, but know lots about games, and have had refreshing conversations with them.

The fact is that, traditionally, you spend thousands of times coming up with a prototype which you take to a publisher and they tell you to come back with another because it's not right. The whole method doesn't work.

Whereas with Scholastic it's a very different, refreshing approach. We aren't dictated to by them at all, it's not the slave/master relationship you get from working with a publisher. Plus they are open to our ideas and we've got major creative input on the project we're working on – there's no visual style guide so far so we're laying a lot of the groundwork for the franchise.

As long as everyone is honest then things will work. If you start off suspicious and hide things that's going to hurt things. We'd never want to tell a publisher how to do their job, yet publishers are always happy to tell developers how to do theirs. That only serves to get people's backs up and is not the way forward.

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Email colin@aswift.com

QA Manager £30k-£35K+ DOE + benefits
Cambridge LD1244QAM
My client, developer and publisher of the MMORPG adventure game RuneScape, is looking for an experienced QA manager with excellent team management skills and a thorough understanding of testing methodologies to take on the challenge of leading the quality assurance team. This is a great opportunity within a stable and rapidly expanding company.

Senior Team Lead hourly paid
London LD93T3
My client is a rapidly expanding computer games publisher within the western market and is the European distribution arm of its Japanese parent company, a worldwide leader in interactive entertainment both inside and outside the home. You should have previous console QA experience within the games industry and be a great team-player.

QA & Localisation
Email lindsay@aswift.com

Web www.aswift.com Tel 01709 876877
Aardvark Swift Recruitment Silicon House, Farfield Park, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 5DB

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Brighton, July 26, 2007

Vol. 88376/34

Develop Awards a Winner

NCsoft Europe, proud sponsors of this year's Develop Awards would like to congratulate each and every winner:

Zenek Nebula

Guest of Honour
Richard Garriott

New Console/PC IP
MotorStorm (Evolution/SCEE External Development)

New Handheld IP
Crush (Zoe Mode)

Best Use of a Licence
Lego Star Wars II (Traveller's Tales)

Visual Arts
Rare (Viva Piñata)

Audio Accomplishment
FreeStyle (B-Boy)

Publishing Hero
Sega

Innovation
Real Time Worlds (Crackdown)

Tools Provider
Havok

Best Use of Online
Eden Studios (Test Drive Unlimited)

Services & Outsourcing
Babel Media

Recruitment Company
Datascope

New UK Studio
Realtime Worlds

Best Handheld Studio
Rockstar Leeds

Business Development
Blitz

Independent Developer
Traveller's Tales

In-House Developer
Ubisoft France

Development Legend
Ian Hetherington

Grand Prix
Sony Computer Entertainment

Disco Squid spo
Sea Life centre

Zenek Nebula

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BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

"There was a demand for a change in our licensing model..."
AI.implant thinks up a new approach, p53

TOOLS: The latest tech news
p50

GUIDE: Focus on MMO engines
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TUTORIAL: XBLA best practice tips
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Heavenly Sound

Listening in on Ninja Theory's sound production for PlayStation 3, p58

SPECIAL FEATURE: PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOCUS > P63

Practising safe game development

WHENEVER THAT POLITE DINNER PARTY question about one's gainful employment arose, it used to be that I could avoid the 'you spend your time playing computer games?' response (generally combined with the raised eyebrow querying 'you're not in your twenties anymore') with a games technology gambit.

Now, however, another lifetime of honest journalistic labour has been blown by one thoughtless remark from one of those so-called funnymen.

Actually, there's very little 'so-called' about Glenn Wool, the Canadian standup who, at the *Develop* Awards, had the UK games industry in a fit of near paralysis not equalled since Steve Ballmer got the word 'developers' stuck in the back of his throat.

Still, when reading out the awards for best tools provider, did he really have to subtitle it 'the best condom category'? Okay, so maybe names such as NaturalMotion, Epic, Kynogon, Perforce and Havok do have something of prophylactic about them. They're certainly more descriptive than Trojan, Mates or Durex. But, once conceived of, the mental image of Mark Rein or Torsten Reil performing the games development equivalent of the 'banana demonstration' is just too graphic.

Glenn Wool wasn't the only person suggesting the withdrawal method of middleware however. I got into trouble for using the word to describe Engenuity's decision to switch its AI.implant middleware to a no-cost model. After further consultation, I'm happy to report it's not being withdrawn. New licenses, including source code and an online community will be available.

Still, I'll be surprised if many new developers of commercial console games decide to use it. Like condoms perhaps, middleware is generally cheap, but it's the support you get from your partner that really matters.

Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

< CODING >

HONING YOUR INSTINCT

Irish vendor Instinct launched its Instinct Studio middleware at the Develop 07 Conference

OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED AT THE Develop Conference, following its public unveiling the previous year, the story's coming together for Irish games technology company Instinct. Currently available for both PC and Xbox 360, and with PlayStation 3 work ongoing, the first deals for its Instinct Studio are expected to be announced in the winter.

"Technically things are looking very good," says business development director, Mike Gamble. "The Xbox 360 version is up and running, while the PlayStation 3 version is moving ahead nicely too – we're aiming for an early winter release."

It all links into Instinct's major selling point of being able to provide what Gamble calls a 'genuine cross-platform story' that isn't about PC technology being shoehorned onto consoles.

"One of our key demos at Develop showed how you can make changes to your game on one platform and see them ripple across to other versions," Gamble points out.

Other recent added features included support for the Lua scripting language and the COLLADA asset exchange schema. "We're also working on pre-fabs, which are a way of enabling lots of people to work on the same level while maintaining coherent control over the changes: it's a type of version control for level editing," Gamble adds.

He admits the commercial side of selling middleware remains as hard to break into as ever though. "The market is reticent in many respects about buying in technology. Unreal is still the one engine people are buying, irrespective of cost."

To that extent, Instinct is now working with Rob Precious, one of the senior sales people for Criterion's RenderWare technology. It's looking to establish a low-key presence in the US as well.

The company's also pushing ahead with grassroots initiatives such as the Instinct training programme for universities and colleges, which is being put together in conjunction with the University of Abertay Dundee. This will use Instinct Studio, priced at educational rates, as the core technology for games education, notably games design and programming.

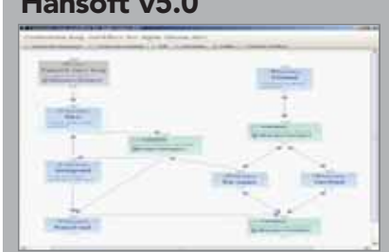
"We're helping to create a situation where tomorrow's game developers will arrive in the workplace with invaluable experience of Instinct Studio under their belts," Gamble explains. "We've believed this has been a gap within the industry for some time and look forward to helping Abertay create innovative game development courses based on Instinct Studio."

www.instinct-tech.com

Instinct Studio v1.0

Price: Available on request
Company: Instinct
Contact: mike@instinct-tech.com

Hansoft v5.0



Price: from €25 per seat, per month
Company: Hansoft
Contact: +46 18 10 90 90
www.hansoft.se

Project management tool Hansoft hits its fifth iteration with a focus to integrate production with the Quality Assurance process. The main outcome is what the company is calling a 'user-friendly and fast bug tracking module' that enables you to track scheduled work and bug-fixing within one application. Free Hansoft seats are also available for QA testers. Further integration with thirdparty bug databases and systems can be carried out through the Hansoft SDK. A real-time management environment, Hansoft ensures a collaborative approach to game development, including support for agile methodologies such as Scrum and eXtreme Programming.

PerfKit 5

Price: free
Company: Nvidia
Contact: +44 118 903 3000
www.developer.nvidia.com

Nvidia's performance toolkit, the imaginatively named PerfKit, reaches release number five with support for DX10 and Windows Vista top of the features list. A key component is the head-up display PerfHUD, which provides real-time interactive debugging and profiling capabilities to enable you to fix performance bottlenecks. Its new features includes: support for the new GeForce 8 Series GPUs; the ability to edit shaders on the fly; a greatly expanded set of GPU and driver signals; a cleaner layout, including improved texture viewing for 2D, 3D and cube map textures; and a colour picker for texture examination.

< ART >

MORPHEME WALKS SMOOTHER

NaturalMotion's animation tool gets in step with better debugging and data navigation

IT'S TAKEN NATURALMOTION JUST four months to get the first point release of its animation engine and toolchain technology morpheme out the door. New features include graphical layers for easy network management and navigation, plus frame buffering and scrubbing of live networks enabling you to better review and debug character motion. Support for source control and the addition of a navigator graph tree for easy hierarchy navigation round out the release.

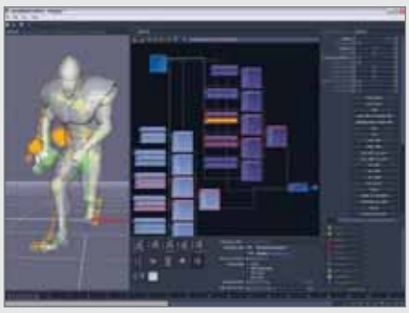
"Morpheme 1.1 continues what we started in 1.0, which is to focus on designing tools that deliver ease-of-use and run-time performance that allows developers and animators to create amazing in-game character performances," says Torsten Reil, NaturalMotion's CEO, of the tool which truncates the loss of animation quality between authoring and in-game deployment.

"The problem with current pipelines is animators spend a lot of time making a particular walk cycle or jump look just right but then in-game it ends up looks shoddy because the transitions, the timings or the blends aren't quite right," he explains.

Available now for PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, morpheme consists of two components: an authoring application for blending animation trees and transition logic; and a runtime engine, for which full source code is provided. Designed to be used as a standalone product, morpheme can also integrate into NaturalMotion's other animation tools such as the euphoria and endorphin motion synthesis technologies.

www.naturalmotion.com

morpheme v1.1



Price: Available on request
Company: NaturalMotion
Contact: +44 1865 250 575

Voice-O-Matic (Maya/XSI)

Price: $349
Company: Di-O-Matic
Contact: +01 1 514 369 2400
www.di-o-matic.com

Lip sync technology Voice-O-Matic is branching out from its 3ds Max plug-in standard to embrace the wider art pipeline world with releases for Maya and XSI in development.

The lip sync process works by analysing the audio files that are fed into the system. This automatically generates timing and lip position data which drives the animation for your 3D models through the technology's phoneme-based algorithms. Up to 40 phonemes are used and languages including English, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish are supported. The technology is also fully scriptable and floating licences are available.

FX Composer v2

Price: free
Company: Nvidia
Contact: +44 118 903 3000
developer.nvidia.com

The second new release this month from Nvidia, FX Composer 2 sees the integrated shader authoring environment for HLSL and CgFX becoming even more collaborative, with support added for COLLADA and XNA and better integration with Nvidia's ShaderPerf tools and Shader Library. Wizards are provided for setting up scripts and effects, while customisable toolbars and layouts are also added. The mental mill Artist Edition software from mental images is bundled with the software too, enabling artists to visually create shaders by connecting nodes which can then be exported to FX Composer 2 where they can be applied to real-world geometry.

< AUDIO >

3D AUDIO SOLD IN STEREO

Sensaura spin-out Sonaptic is snapped up by Wolfson

Great ideas might take time to develop but they'll always be worth plenty in the fullness of time – that seems to be the moral to take from the tale of the 3D audio from stereo speakers technology developed at EMI's research labs in the 1990s.

Initially coming to market in specially recorded albums such as Frank Sinatra's Duels, it then took over the PC audio card business and eventually got into the Xbox in the form of spin-out company Sensaura. Prior to its acquisition by Creative in 2003, the founders of the technology, including Dr. Alastair Sibbald, David Monteith and Richard Clemow, took another detour, forming Sonaptic and applying their 3D audio smarts to mobile devices.

Backed with investment from Motorola, amongst other, it went on gain product wins in many Japanese 3G handsets, including the FOMA range from NTT DoCoMo.

And four years on, in turn, that adventure has come to an end, with the acquisition of Sonaptic by Scottish audio specialist Wolfson for the sum of $24.8 million; something that could rise depending on future performance.

"We remain completely committed to our products and roadmaps. The combination of Sonaptics' technology and Wolfson Microelectronics' world leading electronic design capability will allow us to bring to market an enhanced range of products with unparalleled performance and quality," commented Sonaptic's CEO David Monteith.

www.wolfsonmicro.com

3D Positional Audio

Price: Not applicable
Company: Sonaptic
Contact: +44 131 272 7000

Reason 4

Price: €449
Company: Propellerheads
Contact: +46 8 556 08 400
www.propellerheads.se

Currently undergoing beta testing for an expected mid-August release, the latest version of Propellerheads' Windows/Mac virtual music studio is designed for better workflow, although plenty of new features are added too. These include: Thor, a modular synthesiser featuring six different oscillator types and four unique filters; RPG-8, a real-time programmable monophonic arpeggiator; the ReGroove Mixer real-time groove console; and a completely rebuilt advanced sequencer. Support for multiple takes, a new pattern lane for pattern editing, a new ever-present floating tool window, automation of envelope curves and beat/bar count-in has also been added.

Sonik Synth 2.1

Price: Free upgrade
Company: IK Multimedia
Contact: +44 1223 234414
www.ikmultimedia.com

Primarily designed to offer compatibility with Intel-based Macs under its new universal binary architecture, the latest point release for IK Multimedia's Sonik Synth sample-based workstation package also features a number of new options such as improved Stretch, Pitch/Shift, and Time/Stretch algorithms and BPM syncable low frequency oscillations. Smoother MIDI CC response accompanies improved instrument load time, and search function reliability. Sonik Synth 2.1 is compliant with Pro Tools 7.x and VST 2.4 host like Cubase 4 and Live 6. Compatibility with Apple's Audio Unit is also improved.

GAME CONNECTION

www.game-connection.com

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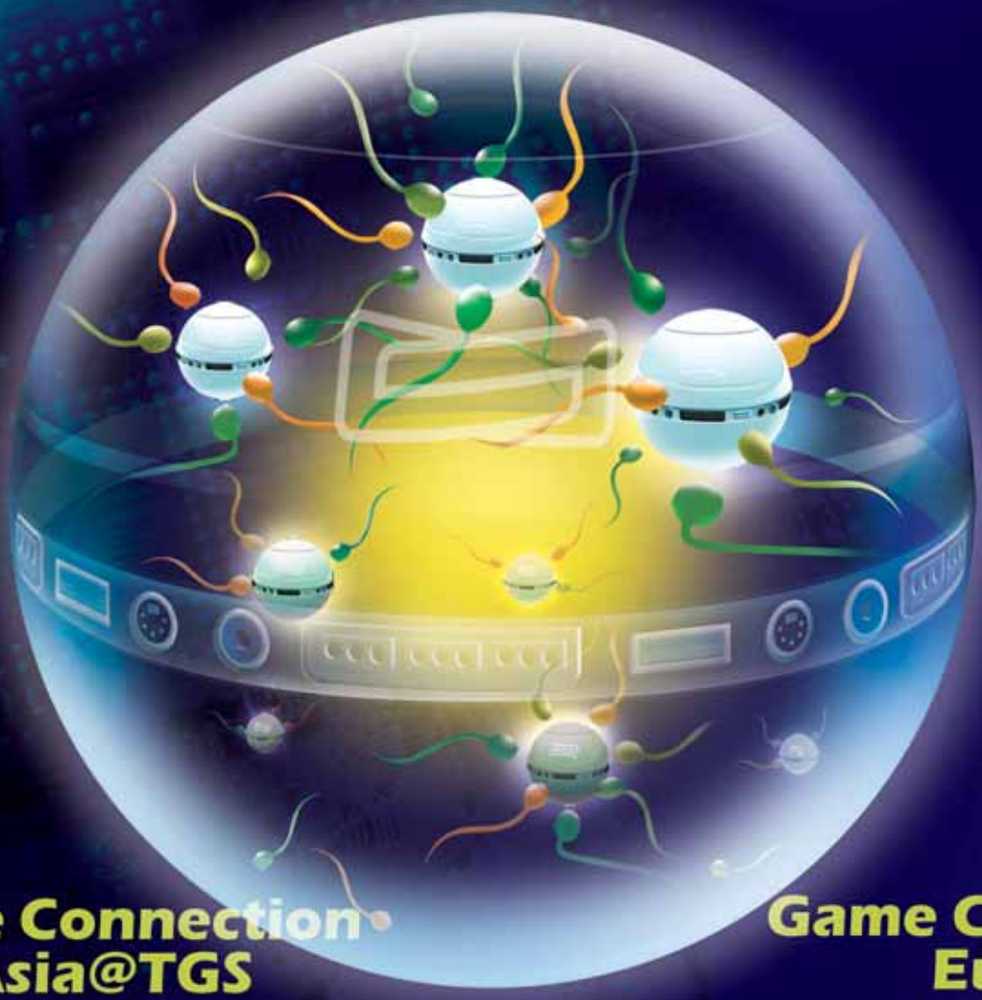

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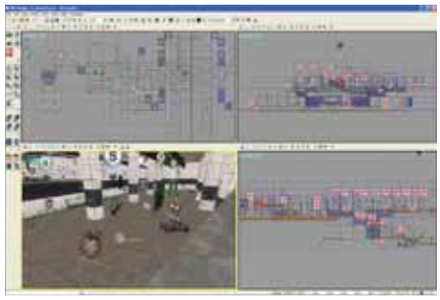
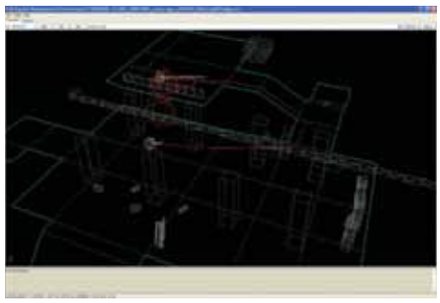
KEYRELEASE

PRODUCT: AI.implant v5
COMPANY: Engenuity
PRICE: free
CONTACT: +01 514 341 3874
W: www.ai-implant.com

Rethinking game AI

What are the implications of AI.implant's new no-costing licensing model?





Left: AI.implant's creator Paul Kruszewski has left the company

Middle: AI.implant was one of the first tools to be integrated with Unreal 3 Engine

Bottom: The package's Development Environment provides a visualisation mode

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch, but as every journalist knows it's a statement that cuts both ways. There are certainly plenty of people who will offer you a dinner gratis, and by the end of the meal, your belly will be full without having spent a dime. The assumption, of course, is that you may have paid for those courses with something other than money: an obligation perhaps.

The same is true of software. In the hard case of open source, the deal is straightforward: you have to share the benefits of your work with the rest of the community. But other types of free software can come with hidden risks too.

In the case of the new commercial 'no-cost' licence for AI.implant, which includes a perpetual source code agreement, access to the AI online learning forum and comprehensive AI.implant documentation, the only official demand is for marketing exposure – such as a logo listed on the finished box – when your AI.implant-powered game is released.

The rub in this case seems to involve how much future development vendor Engenuity will carry out in terms of optimising and maintaining the product for Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, especially as AI.implant's founder Dr Paul Kruszewski and director of operations Aaron Davey have left the company. There's also the issue of the switch of support from being an official part of a paid-for licensing agreement to a more adhoc web-based community approach.

But as Andrew Elvish, vice president of marketing at Presagis – the simulation division of parent company CAE in which Engenuity now sits – argues, the freedom for developers to take the code and embed it into their internal toolchains, maintaining and optimising it themselves, has been accepted by AI.implant clients.

"We undertook this transition very carefully, and ensured that it was a good fit for our customer's business model," he explains.

"There was growing demand from the game developer community for a change in our licensing model, and it was, in fact, Dr. Paul's plan for a very long time to answer that request in a way that benefited future game development and our current business by using the licensing model we announced. His leaving us was not related, in any way, to this new license orientation."

As for the industry's response, Elvish pointed to positive feedback from the likes of Midway Games, BioWare and Vivendi.

"More tellingly, since the announcement, we have received numerous requests from development studios to become a part of this program," he says. "Bottom line is AI.implant is in a leadership position in the middleware market and we are doing everything in our power to keep that position. That is the reason we have created this exclusive perpetual licensing agreement for game developers.

"Our production demands are constantly evolving, and we're thrilled that Engenuity has developed an innovative licensing program that answers our development needs," commented Brian Leake, vice president of technology at Sierra.

"The program enables us to leverage years of investment by Engenuity yet continue to create advanced, customised technology solutions to differentiate our games."

Behind the scenes, however, the reason behind this decision appear to be more to do with CAE's focus on the increasingly profitable military simulation market than the needs of much less lucrative game developers.

Ironically, it was AI.implant's strength in this particular market that saw Kruszewski's original company BioGraphic Technologies bought out by Engenuity in November 2005. Engenuity, in turn, caught the attention of CAE, which has also acquired companies with military simulation expertise such as MultiGen-Paradigm and Terrain Experts, as it looks to expand its military simulation business with the creation of integrated, commercial off-the-shelf software.

> ***"There was a growing demand for a change in our licensing model..."***
>
> ***Andrew Elvish, Presagis***

"There was a bit of a misalignment in terms of the games market and CAE's core market," says Cory Kumm, a BioGraphic veteran who now steps into the role of AI.implant product manager.

"We wanted to modify our business model so we focus more on the training and simulation side. Military simulations have different needs to games. They tend to involve much larger environments and require us to handle hundreds of thousands of entities."

Interestingly though, he says one area of the games industry with which Engenuity wants to remain firmly engaged is the serious games sector.

"We feel strongly that using game technology is a business we want to be in. We're working with the people who use games technology for serious games. The core of AI.implant will remain and the online community will be able to keep that alive," he explains. It's even likely there will be a PSP version of AI.implant as the military people start to use the PSP.

"The only piece we're not going to be working with so closely is the console developers," Kumm says.

MMOENGINEROUNDUP

Build The Online

It's the big risk, bigger reward gamble for developers, but when it comes to MMOGs, at least there's plenty of middleware to choose from…

You know a middleware sector is healthy when there's an overflow list of companies you can't fit into the five slots available for the Develop technology roundups. Indeed, in the case of the technologies hoping to improve the efficiency of the development of massive multiplayer games, one of the hardest decisions is working out where to draw the dividing line between other associated technologies such as networking and the emerging blackarts of hosting and service management.

Emergent Technologies is working hard on its Server and Online Elements for example, while Perpetual is basking in the reflected glory of its recent BioWare product win. It also offers a backend platform for MMOG deployment and operation. Similarly, Sun Microsoft's open source Project Darkstar framework remains available for those who want to abstract away the problems of server-side performance. Networking technologies such as Quazal's Net-Z and Rendez-Vous lobby services could also be used to create less massively persistent online gaming environments.

"Most online developers appear to be happiest doing the tricky stuff in-house..."

Still, it's fair to say that as with the first wave of MMOG middleware, which burnt out at the end of the Internet tech boom, most online developers still seem to be happiest doing most of the tricky stuff in-house.

BIGWORLD

TECHNOLOGY
BigWorld v1.8

CLIENTS
Cheyenne Mountain, Netease, Slipgate Ironworks plus over a dozen others

HOST PLATFORMS
PC, Xbox 360 (PS3 forthcoming)

INTEGRATION WITH...
3ds Max, Diamondware, dPVS, Maya, Spatial Voice, SpeedTree, Vivox

PRICE
Combination backend royalty and/or upfront fee available on request

CONTACT
Gavin Longhurst,
licensing@bigworldtech.com

BigWorld has a terrain engine with geomorphing LOD

www.bigworldtech.com

The current industry leader, BigWorld was also one of the first commercially available middleware MMOG engines. Designated a 'complete solution', it provides you with a 3D client, server and development tools such as its integrated model, particle and world editors. This, and its advanced terrain engine, enables the creation of large worlds with seamless indoor/outdoor environments, while its load balanced server technology can support millions of users.

MONUMENTAL

TECHNOLOGY
Monumental Technology Suite 1.2.5.5

CLIENTS
Available on request

HOST PLATFORMS
PC (Windows/Linux), Xbox 360 and PS3 planned

INTEGRATION WITH...
3ds Max, Diamondware, dPVS, FMOD, Maya, SpeedTree, Vivox

PRICE
Prototype, production and commercial licenses available

CONTACT
Alan O'Dea, +44 115 958 3178,
enquiries@monumentalgames.com

The Monumental Technology Suite uses procedural smarts

www.monumentalgames.com

Rising from the lessons learnt from Climax's stillborn Warhammer MMOG, Monumental Games has taken a fluid, production-centric approach to its middleware. It offers a complete tool-chain for rapid content creation by artists and designers, enabling them to preview their assets and get them into the game.

The tech also uses many procedural techniques for both terrain and characters to allow for scalable asset and content creation.

ICARUS

TECHNOLOGY
Icarus Platform

CLIENTS
Available on request

HOST PLATFORMS
Windows

INTEGRATION WITH...
3ds Max, Ageia, FaceFX, MilkShape, Motion Analysis, SpeedTree, Vivox

PRICE
Available on request

CONTACT
+1 919 244 3048,
info@icarusstudios.com

Icarus developed its Platform for its FPS Fallen Earth

www.icarusstudios.com

An example of a MMOG developer which built its own tools and is now offering them on a commercial basis, Icarus reckons the main selling point of its Platform is that it handles everything from content production and asset management tools to game system modules and a full suite of network administration utilities.

Content creation tools include an integrated building and object editor, particle editor and sound editing tools.

Planet...

HEROENGINE

TECHNOLOGY
HeroEngine
CLIENTS
BioWare
HOST PLATFORMS
Windows
INTEGRATION WITH...
3ds Max, Ageia, Diamondware, dPVS, Maya, SpeedTree
PRICE
Available on request
CONTACT
Neil Harris, heroengine@play.net

HeroEngine can be edited dynamically

www.heroengine.net

Live switching between in-game and editing modes is a key feature of the HeroEngine, thanks to its HeroBlade architecture which links into a share asset library. Any changes made are dynamically updated in each client. Gameplay tweaking is also aid thanks to the HeroScripting language, while DreamManager tool enables designers and QA staff to make notes directly into the game's 3D space.

MULTIVERSE

TECHNOLOGY
Multiverse Platform v1.0
CLIENTS
Over 11,000 registered teams
HOST PLATFORMS
Windows
INTEGRATION WITH...
COLLADA, FMOD, SpeedTree
PRICE
free for development, royalty up to 10 percent
CONTACT
Ron Meiners, random@multiverse.net

Multiverse covers everything from tech, delivery and billing

www.multiverse.net

A different approach to MMOG development comes from Multiverse which offers a free development license to its technology, as long as finished games are made available within its Multiverse Network. Free-to-play games don't incur a licence fee, while commercial games royalties are capped at 10 percent of gross revenues. Client, server, infrastructure tools and gameplay plug-ins such as AI, physics, questing and combat are provided.

Inverse Kinematics

by David Jefferies
Black Rock Studio

A few years ago I was working on a game that required a large rhinoceros to move over steeply undulating terrain. Its feet always had to remain realistically in contact with the ground and its body needed to flex and shift its weight in a believable manner.

One way of finding that extra bit of realism is to use Inverse Kinematics. IK is the process of determining the pose of an articulated figure when given the position of the end joints (known as end effectors). An articulated figure is made up of a series of bones connected by joints. We know where we want the end effectors to be (i.e. we want the rhinos feet to be firmly on the ground) and so we want to calculate the angle of the joints that will result in the feet being in the correct place.

One thing to remember is that there is no analytical solution to the general problem of a skeleton with many bones. There is however an analytical solution to the two-bone IK problem and as most figures are made up of sets of limbs consisting of two bones this is a good place to start.

The mathematics behind the two-bone analytical solution only requires GCSE level trigonometry. Remember the cosine rule? One of the properties of the cosine rule is that you can calculate all the interior angles of a triangle if you know the length of the sides of the triangle.

Consider a rhino's leg that is sticking through the terrain. Using the game's collision detection system, we should be able to calculate the point on the terrain we would like to place the foot; this is where we want the end effector to be.

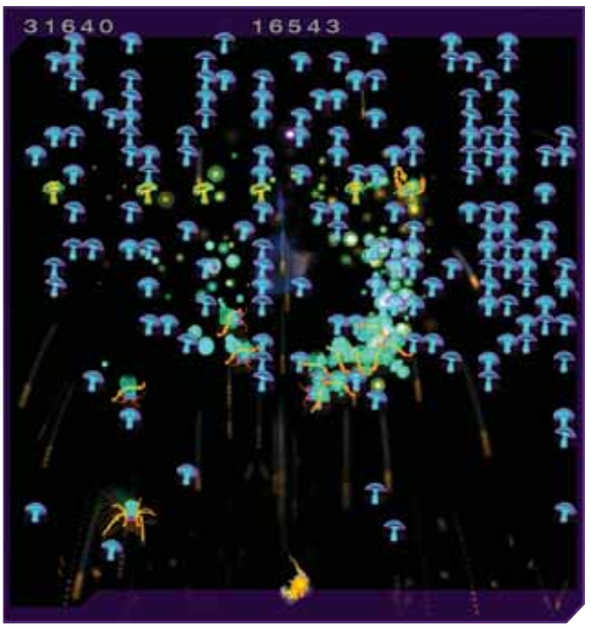
Now consider a triangle with one point being the hip, one being the knee and the other being the end effector. What's interesting here is that we know all of the lengths of the triangle. The hip doesn't move (as far as the IK is concerned) so finding the distance between the hip and the end effector is trivial. Bone lengths can't change so we know the length of the thigh and shin bones. If we know all the lengths then using the cosine rule we can calculate the interior angles and find the correct angle for the hip joint and the knee joint.

Easy really, but one thing to remember is to try and get the IK to do as little as possible – it looks more realistic if you can get canned animation to get you most of the way there and then just use the IK to fix up the last little bit.

And this doesn't just apply to hoofed animals of course. A month or so ago we applied the same techniques to get the riders in *MotoGP'07* to realistically grip the handlebars.

www.blackrockstudio.com

ARCADE FIRE



Developers love digital distribution, that's a fact. Here, Stainless Games' Ben Gunstone offers up some key advice on making games for Xbox Live Arcade…

Stainless Games has now got a number of games published on Xbox Live Arcade and each and every one of them has presented a new challenge for us to overcome.

After moving from Sega Europe and working on big budget retail products I did briefly allow myself to think this was going to easy. XBLA: smaller games, shorter timelines – brilliant! But you know what? Making games is never easy (it wouldn't be fun if it was, right?) XBLA just gave us different challenges, especially when we are applying normal AAA production values to small budget games.

1 PRODUCTION QA TIMES ARE THE SAME – ESPECIALLY MULTIPLAYER

Every developer knows this – multiplayer games are more prone to errors than single player games.

Novadrome is an eight player Live game, and just because it fits within the 50MB download limit doesn't mean that it's sending any less packet data around. Just because it cost 800 points rather 40 or 50 pounds doesn't mean that lag is allowed. Testing and bug fixing this aspect of the game took as long as any other retail eight player racing game. Your QA dept needs to be geared up for this testing and you need to budget for this.

2 TRIAL GAME – IT IS THE HOLY GRAIL

Don't ever underestimate the power of the trial mode in an XBLA game.

Getting this right is the way to increasing that all-important conversion rate – that percentage of free demo downloads that go on to achieve a sale of the full game. There is the perennial balancing act to achieve between letting players see too much (so they feel they don't need to buy your game) versus letting them see too little (so they don't get to see the more exciting aspects, and therefore don't buy the game). For instance, when *Crystal Quest* was originally released on XBLA the trial game showed the first eight levels.

This was great because it showed the player how the game mechanics worked but it didn't let them experience the frantic excitement of the game's later levels. In fact, we've decided to address this issue in a forthcoming Title Update, where the trial version 'skips' levels in order to give the player a better taste of the full version.

3 AAA PRODUCTION VALUES ON A BUDGET COST

Right from the beginning Stainless have pushed the message that we are providing AAA values at a budget price.

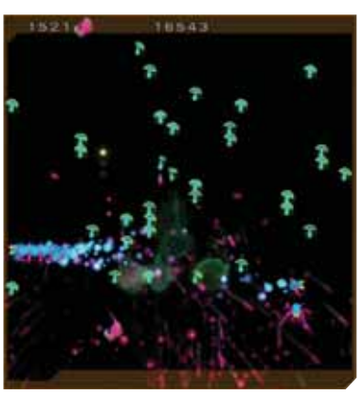
We saw what was coming out on XBLA and decided we can do better. Of course, this costs money. With a small budget game you really have to make sure that the budget reflects the end quality expected from the publisher.

If you get it wrong and have to redo large amounts of work it's pretty unlikely you're going to make any money. This is really the same as bigger budget games but the difference is that the amount of content is smaller by a certain degree but the amount of people working on the title and the budgets available are smaller by a larger degree.

4 CONSUMER AND PRESS EXPECTATION

It's a constant irk that XBLA games get reviewed seemingly alongside the rest of the X360 games releases. Considering a lot of XBLA games get 'casual' releases on PC through sites like MSN games or Steam you don't see those PC versions getting reviewed in mainstream games press. I'd like to see *Eurogamer* do a casual PC review section on their site to get some direct comparisons. If your lead SKU is XBLA, it doesn't matter that other retail games have had millions spent on them, have a DVD of space to fill up and maybe two or three years to make with a team of hundreds. Make sure you try and pick and choose the key 'cool' elements and see how you can emulate them.

"It is a constant irk that Xbox Live Arcade games get reviewed seemingly alongside the rest of the 360's releases…"



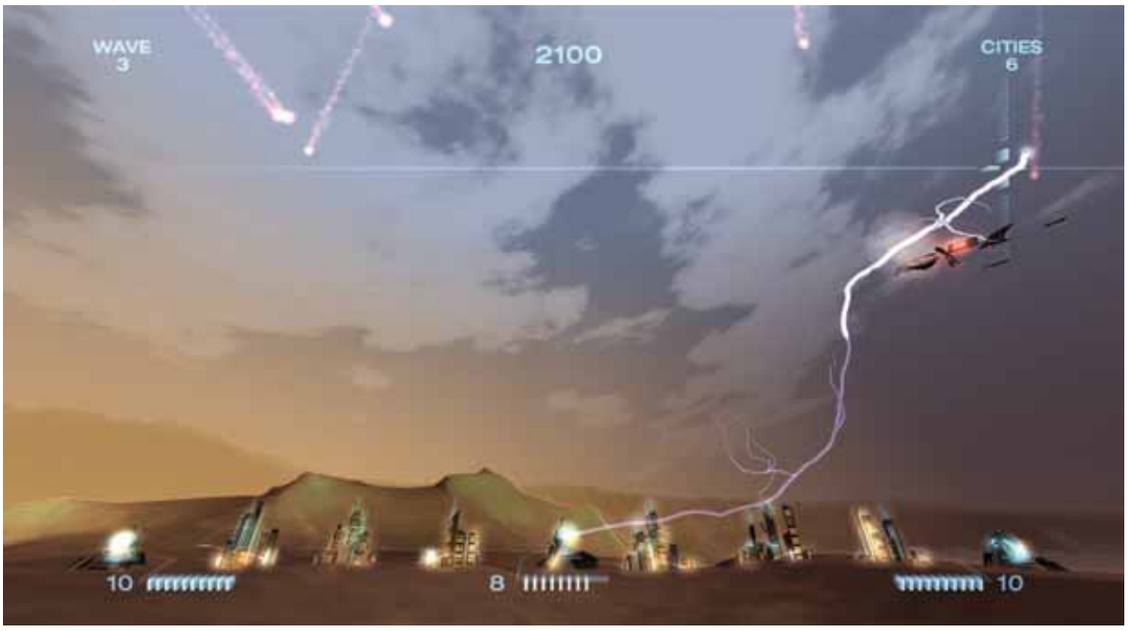
5 PRODUCTION TIMES – EXPECTATIONS AND PROTOTYPING

Designing original games that play well is an art. And guess what: it takes a fair old time to get it right. If you're making a game with a six month time frame (start to submission) and you want it to be AAA quality then it's easy to fall into the trap of designing on the fly and making the game at the same time. Try to get the prototyping done and work with your publisher to make sure they understand the implications of a short timeline – there's not going to be time to do central re-designing three months in as you're already half way through the entire dev cycle.

6 WORKING ON MULTIPLE SHORT TIMELINE PROJECTS

Expect to be in 'release mode' most of the time. This is more for fellow producers and QA teams out there rather than whole teams. If you are working on multiple short time-lined products (like we are at Stainless) expect to be in 'release mode' pretty much most of the time. That means most weeks there is either a milestone to deliver or game gearing up for a submission of some sorts.

A lot of Stainless' clients are in the US which can mean a lot of late nights for the producer. We do put this to our advantage though as it can mean my dev teams here can work all day on a build, I prep it and send it over to the US client for overnight testing, with feedback ready for our UK-based team to work on the next day. Again, it's the same if you were doing a retail product with a US client but the difference is that we only have six months to finish a high quality game, so time is of the essence.



7 MARKETING PRODUCTS AND GENERAL PRODUCT AWARENESS

We've found that XBLA games get next-to-no marketing or product awareness campaigns pre-release. I'm pretty sure that some of this is Microsoft defending the XBLA marketplace and giving the one or two releases each week a chance to breathe. A lot comes down to budget as well – publishers tend to allocate marketing budget based on a percentage of dev budgets and that's not much for an XBLA game normally.

Make sure the marketing team understand the 'XBLA space' as it's obviously different to retail and try to help them as much as possible. We've seen some great examples recently with the Sega game *Happy Tree Friends* where the website (www.happytreefriends.com) is doing a weekly blog of their visit to Stainless for a big design meeting.

8 TASK MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

You've got a small team – that's good. It means communication is simpler and task control is easier. However, that shouldn't lead you into a false sense of security. We've learnt that even with the smallest teams you can't revert back to old-school practises of just doing it all on the fly and hoping it will turn out right. But we do need to keep it simple. There is no point rolling out a product management tool designed to run huge teams on complicated projects if you have a small team of 4 or 5 people all sat in the same room.

We take a practical approach to this that is also scalable to our publisher's needs. We use a central schedule built from major tasks, broken down to a level that I know each individual on the team needs. This is created using MS Project. This gets broken down into a combination of Excel task-sheets for weekly task updates and an online bug/task tracking database called Mantis. Followed up with at least weekly meetings and constant dialogue within the team. We build in feedback from publishers whenever they desire (within reason!). This is normally at four weekly milestones, but can be more or less often depending on how the publisher wants to play it.

If you have been used to working with large teams over longer time periods make sure you use a project management solution that fits the situation – my key tip is to keep it is simple and make sure your team are prepared to use the solution you devise.

9 FILE SIZE

There are strict file size limits set by MS for XBLA. It used to be 50Mb and has recently been increased to 150Mb. The file size limitation is also important when considering PC download. Sites like AOL and MSN can start to charge premiums on content that tops the 50Mb limit. With this in mind you need to be careful how you pitch the game (don't set expectation too high) and you need to be very careful with data management. Our art creation pipeline uses an internal tool called Acolyte for level creation and texture/mesh manipulation. Once items leave Acolyte we then use our in-house tool called CRUSH to compress the data. CRUSH pre-processes the assets and strips out non-essential data to convert to the exact binary representation for the Xbox thus leaving us with smallest possible file size.

10 ACCESS TO MICROSOFT XBLA TEAM

MS have a liaison and tech team working on XBLA. If your game is being published by a third party publisher you won't get direct access to this team. This makes some of the XBLA specific certification rules more difficult to access – it can be a trial by error scenario. Try your hardest to get access to this team as they are the experts.

11 CONTENT PACKS

One area where extra revenue can be generated on XBLA is through the use of content packs. It makes a lot of sense to build this into the code structure from the beginning. It can be a gamble as it will change the way the code is built and it may make take more time but leaving it open to create content packs (even if the initial specification doesn't call for it) can allow you to capitalise on your game after release.

As a fall back MS do allow you to do Title Updates but beware if you do more than one Title Update MS may well ask you to cover the certification cost if it includes executable data.

When you boil it down, making games for XBLA is the same as for any other platform. You need to create a feature set and a schedule to meet the timeline and budget that is available to you. The difference is that the time from design to going Live is so much quicker so there is less room for error. You have to be quick and you have to be right and you need to be quick and right the first time round.

www.stainlessgames.com

OUR TOOLCHAIN

Here's technology we use for building our XBLA titles…

TOOLS USED

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
MS Project
Excel
Mantis

VERSION MANAGEMENT
SVN
SourceSafe

ART/SOUND
3D Studio MAX
Maya
Photoshop
Sound Forge

CODE
Microsoft Visual Studio .NET
Visual Assist

INTERNAL TOOLS
Acolyte for level creation and general 3D mesh/texture manipulation
Importers and exporters for 3ds Max, Maya and Photoshop
CRUSH – a WAD creation tool
Beelzebub – Stainless' mature and stable multiplatform code base

"Beware: if you do more than one Title Update, MS may ask you to cover the certficiation costs…"

***Ben Gunstone** is production director at Stainless Games overseeing the studio's portfolio, which includes twelve Xbox 360 Live Arcade games. He previously worked in QA for Nintendo and then SCi, moving up to become a producer before moving to a similar role at Sega Europe, where he managed external products.*

HEARDABOUT

Heavenly Sword

John Broomhall talks to Ninja Theory's Tom Colvin and SCEE's Garry Taylor about the audio production of a PlayStation 3 epic…

FORMATS: PlayStation 3
DEVELOPER: Ninja Theory
PUBLISHER: SCEE
AUDIO TEAM:
For Ninja Theory
Tom Colvin (lead audio)
Nitin Sawhney (original music score)
Dave Sullivan (senior sound designer)
Play It By Ear (foley and cut scene sound design)
Harvey Cotton (audio programming)

For SCEE Cambridge
Garry Taylor (audio management and cut scene mixing)
Lee Banyard, Jeremy Taylor, Andrew Riley (additional sound design)
Ed Colyer, Shepperton Studios (additional foley)
Dan Bardino, John Broomhall, Kenneth Young, Dave Ranyard (additional audio production)
Chip Bell (audio programming)

THE NUMBERS:
10GB of sound FX, approximately three and a half hours of music, 4,500 lines of dialogue

Ninja Theory's Tom Colvin and SCEE's Garry Taylor

With an epic story, epic game and an epic audio production, *Heavenly Sword* oozes high production values. Even before audio lead Tom Colvin's personal two and a half year labour of love began, a belief in the power of sound had already been demonstrated by the team's calling for potential signature sound designers to pitch – a practice more commonly associated with composers.

Colvin explains: "Al Zaleski's demo work (at audio team Play It By Ear) stood head and shoulders above the others and his movie pedigree speaks for itself. To top that, he was great to work with. I'm really happy with the foley and combat sounds – all vitally important for a game so focused on graceful, agile, martial arts-style sword fighting.

"For me, sound is very 'immediate' to the player. Music has a well-established cultural language; sound is much less clearly delineated – but you can get straight to someone's emotional responses with it – there's little time for the brain to analyse. Sound is key in making this awesome weapon – the Heavenly Sword – come to life so you can sense its brooding power and almost hear it feeding off each kill."

The game features a strong narrative exploring the interplay between heroine Nariko, her father, their clan subjugated by an evil king, and their guardianship of the Heavenly Sword, an historical weapon with the power to change their fate. Cut scenes play a vital role but with visual finessing continuing late into the project, the sheer scope of work was a challenge.

> ***"Sound is key in making the Heavenly Sword come to life…"***
> ***Tom Colvin, Ninja Theory***

SCEE's Garry Taylor elaborates: "There's an hour and a half's worth of cut scenes in eleven languages, so mixing alone was a massive undertaking. That's why we 'in-sourced' all the dialogue mixing to our colleagues in Foster City, USA whilst I focused on the music and effects mix at our new Cambridge-based recording studio. I kept a close eye on continuity issues to avoid any jarring between in-game and cut scene sound – whether ambiences or relative levels or even matching FMOD's surround positioning. Some cut scenes are very small segments replayed within complex branching structures so we ended up using three-frame audio overhangs at the top and tail to cross-fade on – it works a treat."

According to Colvin respected music artist Nitin Sawhney was a clear choice as composer: "We wanted someone with a genuine grounding in Eastern culture who was equally at home with contemporary or classical forms, as well as being completely comfortable with the project's technological setting. With his eclectic talents, Nitin was perfect and enjoyed the opportunity to create for a wide-ranging and diverse set of requirements.

"In-game, we work a lot with his mix stems (e.g. perc, strings, woodwind) bringing them together in response to game events and status. Several factors (e.g. threat level) are weighted and combined to determine the exact music replay – but it isn't just a universal 'cross-fade, catch-all' approach. We make the engine observe the music forms to allow (say) long emotionally-charged vocal phrases to play out properly, rather than being faded out just because the game state's changed. This allows the music flow to be maintained – it keeps the connection to the action, without compromising musical sense."

Taylor and Colvin undertook an overall mixing phase during the development's final stages, again deploying SCEE's studio as the objective listening environment and using Ninja's powerful run-time mixing tools. Explains Colvin: "We have the virtual equivalent of a 'flying faders' film mixing console with extensive hierarchical grouping and scene snapshots. 'Live' editing of audio at this stage is absolutely essential – not just volumes, but proximities, frequency fall-off – even the listener position…"

Taylor continues: "…and also not being afraid to strip things back if necessary. Sometimes when you stand back and take in the overall sound picture, you think - does that really need to be there? Never distract the player's focus! The machine's so powerful now – capable of handling so much audio, which is great – but as we all know when you're mixing, sometimes 'less is more'."

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
develop@johnbroomhall.co.uk
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

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Another fantastic E3 for Unreal Engine 3

Here's a look at key Unreal Engine 3 announcements and milestones from E3 this year...

Unreal Tournament 3 is exclusive to Sony on console this year and its development will help with the optimisation of Unreal Engine 3 on PS3

PLAYSTATION 3 GETS OPTIMISED UE3

Sony Computer Entertainment and Epic Games announced a multi-stage agreement whereby we will work closely together to optimise Unreal Engine 3 (UE3) for PS3 development to assist developers using the engine, accelerate game creation and maximise performance. Already underway, this optimisation currently affects several developers using the Unreal Engine to create 20 games already in the works and with many more to come.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3 EXCLUSIVE ON PS3 THIS YEAR AND REDEFINING USER-CREATED CONTENT FOR CONSOLES

Also announced at the Sony press briefing was that *Unreal Tournament 3* is a console exclusive on PS3 for this year.

Also, thanks to the open nature of the PlayStation Network, users will, for the first time ever on a home console, be able to take the robust user-created content (or 'mods') created using *Unreal Tournament 3*'s UE3 toolset on PC and play them on PS3.

With great performance, and the ability to support user-created mods, *Unreal Tournament 3* on PS3 will be everything that gamers have come to expect from the Unreal Tournament franchise.

One news site reported that "you can definitely tell that the engine has been well optimised to run spectacularly well on the PS3". This is great news for UE3 licensees on PS3 especially considering that we'll be continuing to optimise PS3 performance leading up to the release of *Unreal Tournament 3* on PS3 in November 2007. Windows XP/Vista, Macintosh and Linux versions will also ship later this year.

GEARS OF WAR COMES TO WINDOWS

That *Gears of War*, the number one selling game on Xbox 360, blew people away with great smoothness and performance shouldn't normally come as a surprise. However the big surprise was seeing it on PC at E3. To show off the upcoming Windows version of the game, and how well our UE3 Windows optimizations are coming along, we staged multiplayer games of *Gears* on PCs at 1920 by 1200 resolution. Many users were amazed at the 60 frames per second performance on great hardware provided by our partners Dell and Nvidia. Equal effort is being put toward making the game, and engine, run on lower-end PCs as well. *Gears of War* will ship this fall for Windows XP and Vista.

UNREAL ENGINE 3 TO SUPPORT GAMES FOR WINDOWS LIVE

Microsoft also announced during their E3 press briefing that Unreal Engine 3 will support Games for Windows Live.

According to Microsoft, "this landmark announcement will make it easier than ever for developers to take advantage of Microsoft's online gaming network, through Epic's next generation technology."

KUJU HAS THE CHEMISTRY FOR UE3

Chemistry is one of five specialist studios formed by Kuju Entertainment. Formerly known as Kuju Sheffield (founded in 2002), Chemistry recently announced that it is going to use Unreal Engine 3 exclusively for this console generation.

Specialising in UE3 allows the studio to get continuously more proficient at using it and develop increasingly polished games over time.

We know this strategy very well because it is exactly what we're doing here at Epic. Like Epic, Chemistry can take advantage of having UE3 as their common technology base with multiple teams sharing resources and expertise to built world-class games in the most efficient fashion. UE3's mature toolset, and cross-platform capabilities should help ensure their success

Simeon Pashley, head of the studio explained: "We've decided to specialise in Unreal Engine as it's clearly an awesome next-gen toolset that frees our staff to focus on bringing their creative talents to bear without worrying about the low-level nuts and bolts. It's also perfect for our future plans as it allows us to look forward without worrying about technology stability."

Chemistry has two Unreal Engine 3-based games currently in development.

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

EDINBURGH INTERACTIVE FESTIVAL
Edinburgh, UK
August 15th to 17th, 2007

GAMES CONVENTION
Leipzig, Germany
August 22th to 24th, 2007

GDC CHINA
Shanghai, China
August 27th to 29th, 2007

TOKYO GAME SHOW
Makuhari Messe, Japan
September 20th to 22nd, 2007

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' Unreal Engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

FOR RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES PLEASE VISIT:
www.epicgames.com/epic_jobs.html

*Canadian-born **Mark Rein** is Vice President and Co-Founder of Epic Games based in Cary, North Carolina. Epic's Unreal Engine 3 has won Game Developer Magazine's Frontline Award for Best Game Engine for the past three years and Epic was recently awarded Best Studio at the Spike TV Video Game Awards. Epic recently shipped Gears of War, which broke Xbox 360 sales records. The studio is currently working on Unreal Tournament 3 for publisher Midway.*

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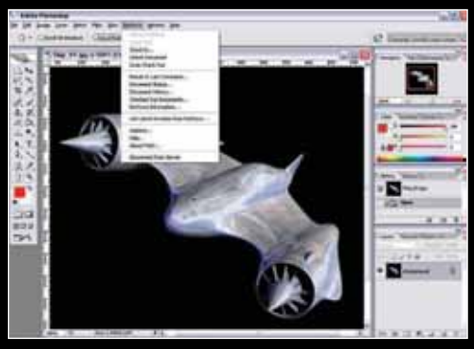

P4GT

The Perforce Plug-in for Graphical Tools, P4GT, makes version control painless by seamlessly integrating Perforce with leading graphical tools. Drop-down menus allow access to Perforce from within 3ds Max, Maya, Softimage XSI, and Adobe Photoshop.

Art and development teams can standardise on Perforce to version and manage both source code and digital assets. Enhanced collaboration during the design process helps teams to work together in real time to release small patches or create whole new worlds.

P4GT is just one of the many productivity tools that comes with the Perforce SCM System.

PERFORCE
SOFTWARE

Download a free copy of Perforce, no questions asked, from www.perforce.com. Free technical support is available throughout your evaluation.

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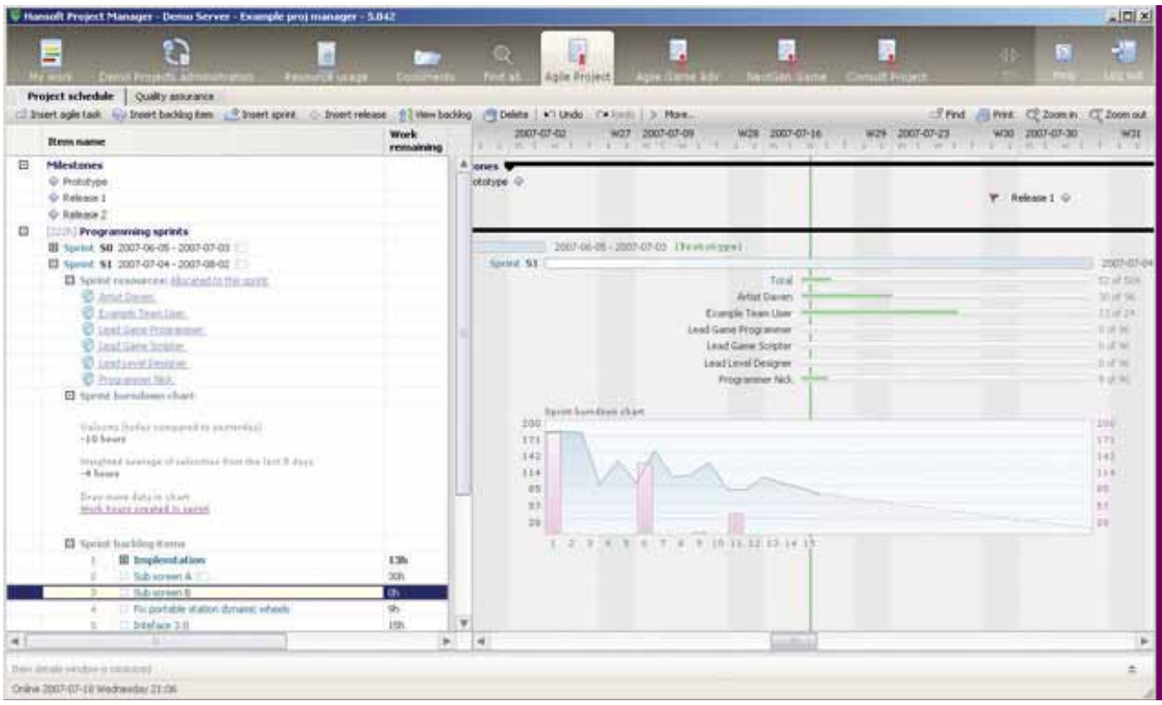
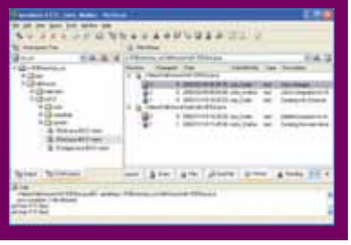
CHAMPIONSHIP Management

Managing a next-gen project can feel like trying to tame Godzilla, but there are software solutions and fashionable paradigms that claim to make your life easier, discovers Ed Fear...



Left: Hansoft 5.0 has gained significant traction within the games industry thanks to support for planning Agile cycles and integrated QA tools

Below: Perforce's platform agnostic Visual Client can run on all major operating systems, with a web client available for remote project administration



Managing the development of a game has never been an easy process: how do you schedule the disparate elements so that the game not only gets made on time, but also hits publisher milestones and trade events with enough panache to garner enthusiasm? With the increase of scale that this generation now typifies, the process of development is an even more bloated beast, one that's harder to reign. Which is where project management software comes in.

With teams larger than ever before, effectively communicating project and status becomes harder, so it's important that the management solution can help the team feel confident that they're all on the same page.

"Games are not just made by programmers," says Dave Robertson, director of European operations at Perforce. "A crucial aspect of supporting bigger teams is to be inclusive of all types of contributors to the team. This has meant the need to add user interfaces and tool integrations to our software for artists, testers, technical writers, managers and publishers."

Similarly, the high-definition era has ushered an increase in the physical domain too, with high quality texture, normal and parallax maps increasing the size of assets – and therefore the size of the entire project.

"Job number one for our engineers is to constantly improve performance and scalability," says Robertson. "Clearly, what is routine today would have been extreme a few years ago, so the server must stay just fast enough to meet users' expectations."

PREMIER MANAGERS: Top row left to right – Joe Maruschak, Garage Games; Kevin Hassall, Oxygen Interactive; David Veevers, Reach Business Mentoring. Bottom row – Kevin G. Clarke, Softimage; Patric Palm, Hansoft; Dave Robertson, Perforce.

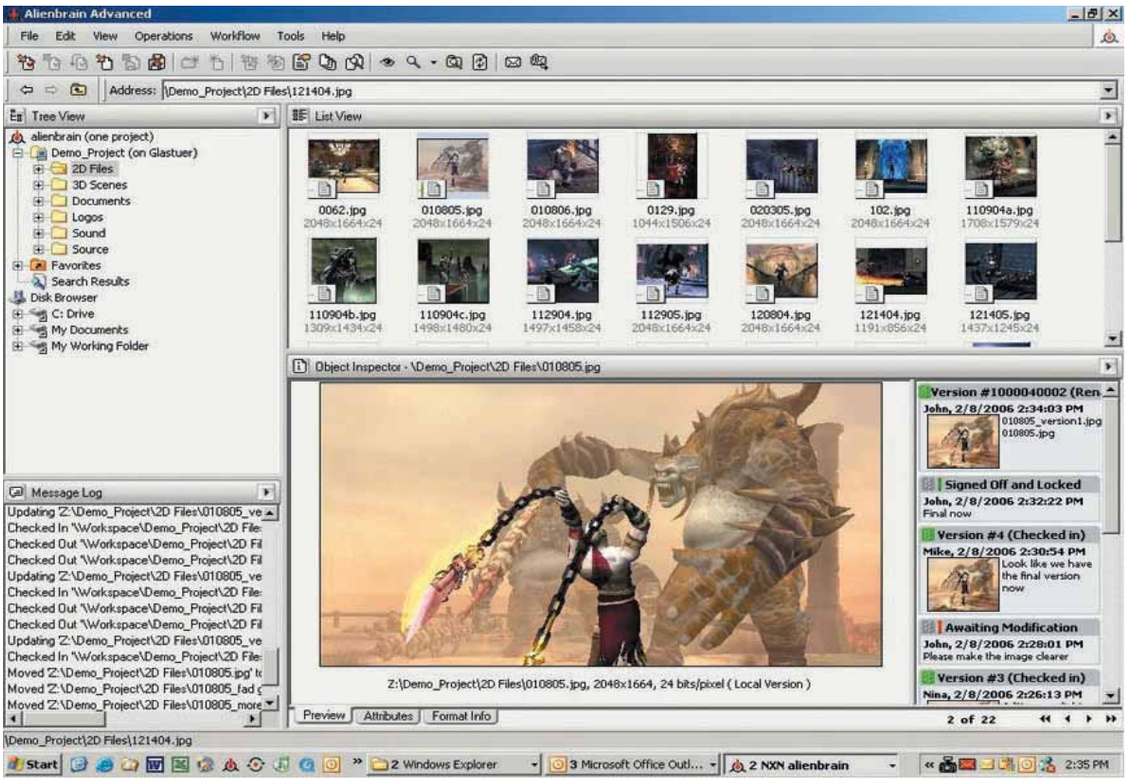
Staff Management

As well as managing staff on a team-level, asks David Veevers, does your studio manage them on an individual level? An expert in people development, Veevers was called in to Evolution studios during development of the *Develop* Award-winning *MotorStorm*.

"The work itself began with a one to one session with Matt Southern, senior producer at Evolution, so that the company could see how support for the team could work in practice," he explains.

"During these exercises there were a number of specific challenges that were individual to each person. These issues, if not tackled, would clearly disrupt the creative and production process and could jeopardise the game's progress."

Over 12 months, Veevers facilitated one-to-one meetings, group discussions and telephone support sessions. He isn't shy about enumerating the benefits: "At the end of the process, individuals had greater self confidence, enhanced esteem and a clearer understanding of their potential and how to achieve their targets," he enthuses. "The positive nature of the experience led to a new company culture."



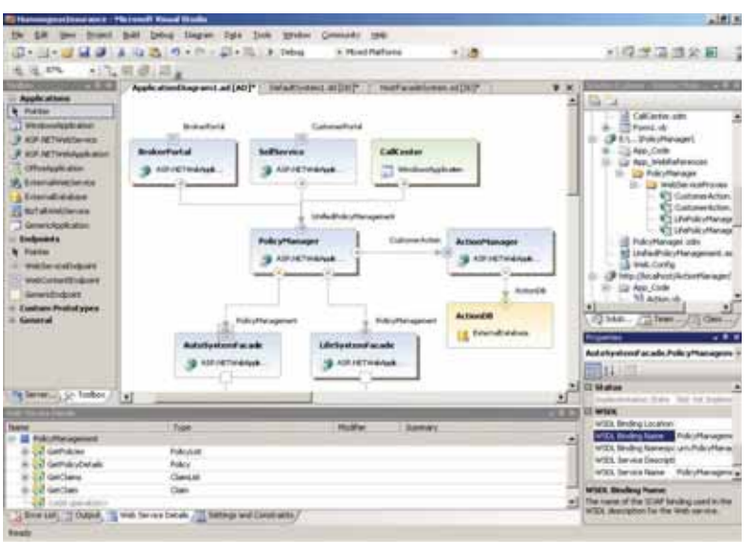
The other main trend affecting project management is the rise of outsourcing, and the challenges that brings with regards to keeping track of external development progress.

"Outsourcing requires very specific collaborative project and asset sharing resources," explains Kevin G. Clarke of Softimage, developers of the Alienbrain asset management and source control system. "Current and future versions of Alienbrain provide solutions to both this and the size issue."

"With outsourcing collaboration becomes tricker and needs more attention," adds Hansoft's Patric Palm. "We have functionality that enables outsourcers to be a live part of production but with limited visibility, making it easier to manage the outsourced part and reducing the risk of losing control."

"Fun gameplay needs to be discovered and nurtured through a methodology that rejects the fallacy that 'locking down' designs is a good thing..."

Ed Daly, Zoë Mode



AGILITY MODIFIER

As projects get bigger and teams similarly inflate, it's becoming clear to many that traditional ways of managing projects aren't quite as suitable as they may have once been.

Most troubling is the extra momentum that size gives to a project: the more people that are involved with each feature, and the more things each feature affects, the harder it gets to modify further on down the project.

As such, the traditional 'waterfall' approach of exhaustively planning a project at the beginning and then following that plan closely is highly resistant to change – and that's a problem, says Ed Daly, studio head at Zoë Mode.

"Fun gameplay needs to be discovered and nurtured through a methodology that rejects the fallacy that 'locking down' designs is a good thing," he comments.

What Daly and many others find themselves moving towards are more Agile development paradigms, management methods that emphasise an iterative approach over a large one-time planning phase. One of the first and most popular Agile methods is Scrum, which breaks the development timeline down into a series of smaller 'sprints' that each end with a working version of the product.

"The core Agile tenant is Embrace Change," explains Daly. "At Zoë Mode we applied Scrum to our *EyeToy: Play* titles following a post-mortem of a previous project in which team communications and decision making suffered from bottlenecks at the top."

Daly isn't coy when talking about how moving to Scrum benefited Zoë

Breath of fresh air

Developers certainly have their fair share of problems that require management, but what about publishers? With more than just a vested interest in the way the project turns out, how far should publishers get involved with team management?

As London-based publisher Oxygen found itself growing and managing more products simultaneously, it began to realise that it would need to formalise a process for managing developers, says publishing director Kevin Hassall.

What they did was to realise that having an producer on the publisher side as well as one at the development team simply lead to conflict. "Having a producer here and expecting the developer to have a producer on their end as well just turns into a tug of war," he explains.

"Each has his own vested interests if the project starts going badly – both of them are thinking 'if this goes to hell I'm going to make sure the other guy gets the blame'. It can be a nasty political situation."

The solution, Oxygen thinks, is to pick someone at the development team to be the 'key', the chief contact between the two parties, says Hassall. "Rather than us sending producers to rally the developers, the key comes and visits us regularly – once a week, once a month, whatever it is – and they'll spend time here. They will spend time in the marketing meetings, and they'll spend time just working in the open-plan office picking up rumours and information as they go around."

This time spent at the publisher means the 'key' becomes aware of the publishing process and what it is the publisher wants from the developer from the beginning. They can go back to the team early on and communicate what marketing are saying rather than doing it later in the project, when it's harder to change things and the developer starts to feel more like the publisher is 'interfering'.

Of course, changing the format of the publisher-developer relationship is going to cause a few teething problems, adds Hassall. "For a lot of developers it is very, very difficult to work with this new process. They're used to someone coming in and telling them exactly what to do – if it doesn't work, they can blame them. But now we tell them what we want to achieve and that's it – and they can feel lost.

"We give responsibility to them – there is no attempt to control, there's no attempt to micromanage – we never put producers in place at developers. This, and getting marketing involved at the beginning, changes the way the project is run."

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Product round-up

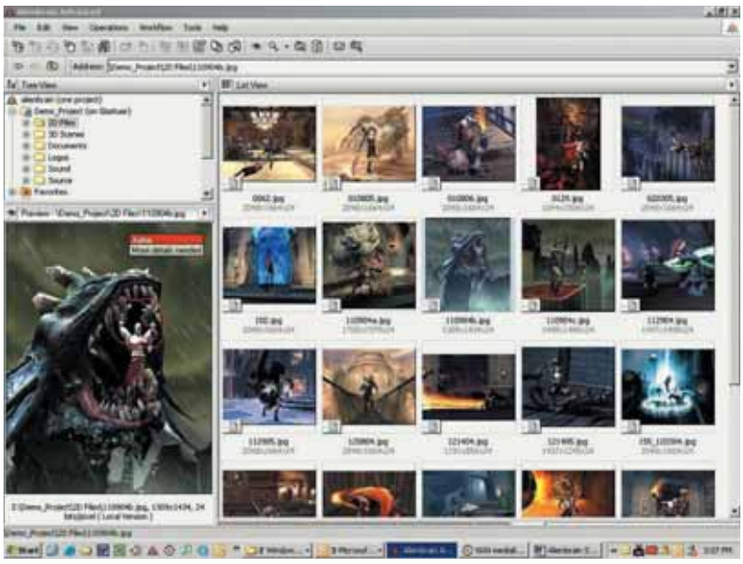
Perforce
PERFORCE SOFTWARE
Perforce is built on a platform-agnostic client-server architecture and features a graphical merge tool, built-in defect tracking and the Perforce Proxy for remote collaboration. Customers include Lionhead, BioWare, Irrational, Epic and Ubisoft.

Hansoft
HANSOFT
Used by studios such as Electronic Arts, The Creative Assembly and Eidos, Hansoft 5.0 features integrated project management and QA tools with extra support for planning Agile development cycles.

Alienbrain
SOFTIMAGE
Softimage's asset-tracking and version control system is used by a large range of studios including Capcom, id, and Nintendo, and features a graphical front-end designed for use by artists and other non-technical staff.

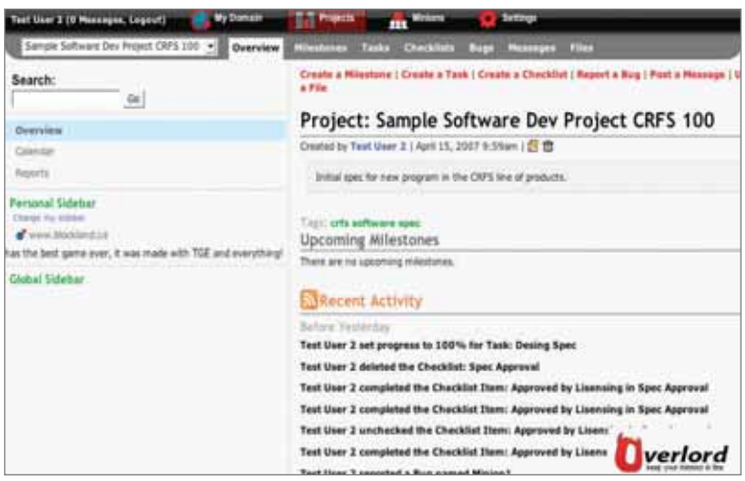
Visual Studio 2005 Team Edition
MICROSOFT
The team-focused edition of Microsoft's ubiquitous development suite includes tools to help developers work together more effectively and visually plan projects in an intuitive manner.

Overlord
RANDOM DEVELOPMENTS
An indie-aimed project management solution with an appropriately low price, Overlord is designed to keep remotely-distributed indie or hobbyist teams up to date with milestone planning, task and bug management and integrated communication tools.



"I've met a lot of people who were really keen to use Scrum and believed in it, but weren't able to convince their bosses to adopt it – I guess giving their team more power sounds scary to some managers..."

Simon Benson, Evolution Studios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Overlord

Independent thought

It's not just big teams that require management software, says Jacob Fike, developer of Overlord. A web-based project management solution picked up for sale by indie-supporter Garage Games, Overlord came about through working with independent developers and mod teams. During his time with these groups he became aware that management was a sticking point – and sometimes a project's downfall.

"The teams I was working with quickly fell apart because, with only a forum to communicate with, there didn't seem to be any progress," he explains. "I started thinking about how many mods and even games get started but never finished and realised that some of those might not have failed if they had better team management tools."

The problem for indies, Fike says, is that there isn't the resources, or indeed the desire, to dedicate a team member to making sure everything is going smoothly – and even if there was, the geographically diverse nature of many indie teams add a further roadblock.

"A large studio could also afford to have one or more people dedicated to coordinating their projects and keeping track of everything, while an indie team rarely has the manpower to spare for managerial duties. As such, tools that make assigning tasks, setting goals, and keeping in touch with everyone as easy as possible are very important."

Joe Maruschak, studio director at GarageGames, thinks indies face the same problems that larger teams do – just at a different scale: "At a high level, all projects face the problem of how to manage time. Time is the most valuable resource, and humans have a tendency to squander it.

"Project management is all about making sure that the important things are done in the right order and the correct amount of time is spent on each task – and indies face the same challenge. But indie developers often don't think about what they are doing, in what order, and how this affects when they will be done."

Mode: "The immediate benefit was an upsurge in team buy-in, but we also felt that Scrum gave more meaningful control for publishers, less risk to deadlines and better fit of effort and outcome." And most importantly: "More fun games."

While our contacts were all keen to espouse the benefits of Scrum, none of them claimed it was an easy ride.

"The transition was and remains a difficult process, as the full benefits of Scrum will only flow if all stakeholders and team members are on board," warns Daly.

The other difficulty that can rise from attempting to adopt Scrum is resistance from those who don't understand, explains Evolution's Simon Benson. They adopted Scrum after traditional planning methods failed them in the run towards E3 and used it to help turn *MotorStorm* around in under two years.

"In my opinion it seems that most resistance to Scrum adoption comes from risk-averse senior management," he explains.

"I have been on many courses about Scrum and Agile methods and I've met a lot of people who were really keen to use Scrum and believed in it, but were not able to convince their bosses to adopt it – I guess giving their team more power sounds scary to some managers."

"Agile has a lot of weaknesses when it comes to the long term perspective of production," adds Palm. "We've developed solutions in Hansoft for this without losing the benefits of the core principles of Agile."

Despite the transition difficulty, Daly would still definitely recommend studios at least take a look at Scrum. "Though it by no means guarantees success, I'd recommend Scrum to other studios - the balance of discipline and rigour with flexibility is a great fit for game development."

UP CLOSE AND PERSONNEL

A third approach to managing projects is to take a more personal stance and ensure staff are properly coached and mentored – an approach that Evolution took with *MotorStorm* by bringing in people development expert David Veevers of Reach Business Mentoring.

"Mentoring provides specialist support through the use of techniques to help people to answer the questions that have never been asked," explains Veevers. "Within your organisation you need to establish champions to provide ongoing support to people working at all levels. This is a great way to create awareness of potential obstacles and is a great platform to shape the organisation going forward."

Benson concludes with a grounding thought, one that's important to keep in mind while considering new approaches to management: regardless of how you go about it, the success of a game is still almost entirely dependent on the skill of the team members. "The industry and medium is still about talent regardless of development method. If you have a sub-standard team using Scrum, you'll get a game on target and to budget – but it'll still be shit."

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Simon – University of Bradford Graduate 2006 – now a Level Designer - Rockstar Leeds

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Ben – University of Lincoln Graduate 2006 – now a Programmer – Free Radical Design.

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Instinct and Abertay provide educational kit
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TRAINING:
UK Game Academy scheme opens
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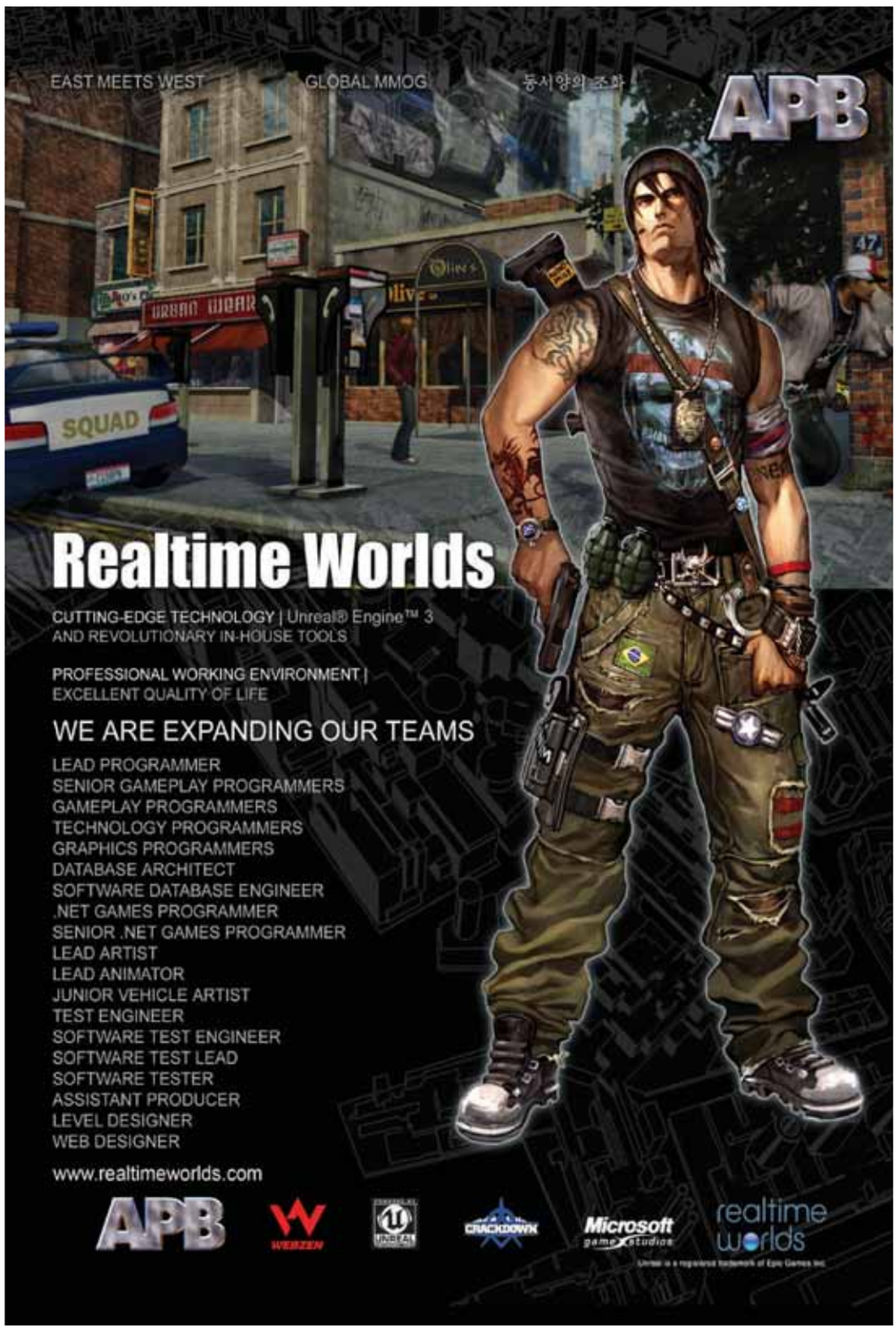

Studio News

Games development's movers and shakers.
This month: New faces at Swordfish, Capcom and Blitz

Swordfish is celebrating an influx of new talent this month with eight new recruits.

The art department welcomes Christian Russell (*top row, left*), who has 12 years experience at studios such as Gremlin, Core and Circle Studio. Alan Sawdon (*top row, centre*), whose background is in 3D films and effects also enters the art team, alongside car-fan Gary Tonge (*top row, right*), whose 20 years in the industry will no doubt prove of much use to the company.

Joining the design team is Oli Clarke Smith (*centre row, left*), who describes himself as a Japanophile and Xbox 360 fan and would probably argue strongly that those two interests aren't oxymoronic. Former PR man Andy Watt (*centre row, centre*) joins Swordfish's production department after stints at US Gold, Eidos, Codemasters and Core.

Finally, three new boffins join the programming team: cricket fan Jon Attfield (*centre row, right*), who has worked at Codemasters and Relic Entertainment; Mark Logan (*bottom row, left*), Free Radical Design alum and Chris Howe (*bottom row, right*), who joins the company from Circle Studio.

www.swordfishstudios.com

Capcom Europe welcomes Darryl Shaw into the fold as a senior producer. Joining from THQ Wireless, Darryl has over 11 years experience in the industry and has worked with brands such as *Juiced* and *MotoGP*. Darryl will be based in the company's London headquarters and his first project will be *MotoGP 07*.

"Darryl's appointment confirms Capcom's commitment not just to externally developed projects, but specifically those from the European region. His previous experience on racing titles, will prove invaluable for the release of *MotoGP 07* on the PlayStation 2," commented Scot Bayless, vice president product development.

www.capcom-europe.com

Blitz Games' headcount has hit 200 for the first time, with the addition of three new staff.

David Todd and Ross Gowing have joined the growing QA department, while Mike Bithell joined the company's pitch and business development team as a junior designer.

Geraldine Randle, HR manager of Blitz Games said: "Our continued growth is necessary due to the growing demand for our skills. We've got a raft of exciting projects under way on current and next generation consoles for some of the best publishers in the industry. 2007 will be another eventful and exciting year for all the divisions at Blitz."

Philip Oliver, CEO of Blitz Games added, "We strive to provide the best possible working environment for our staff, offering great conditions, an exciting range of titles to work on and a host of free on-site training opportunities. Our staff turnover is one of the lowest in the industry and we have many people who have been with us for 10 years or more. We realise that our staff are a key asset and take pride in looking after them so to reach this milestone is fantastic."

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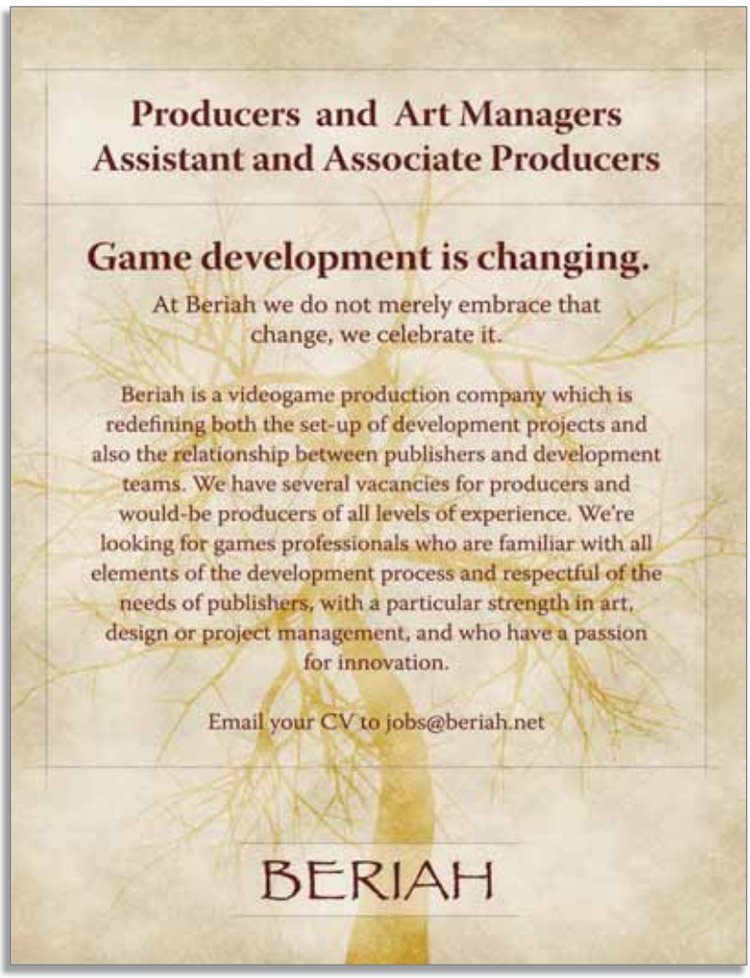
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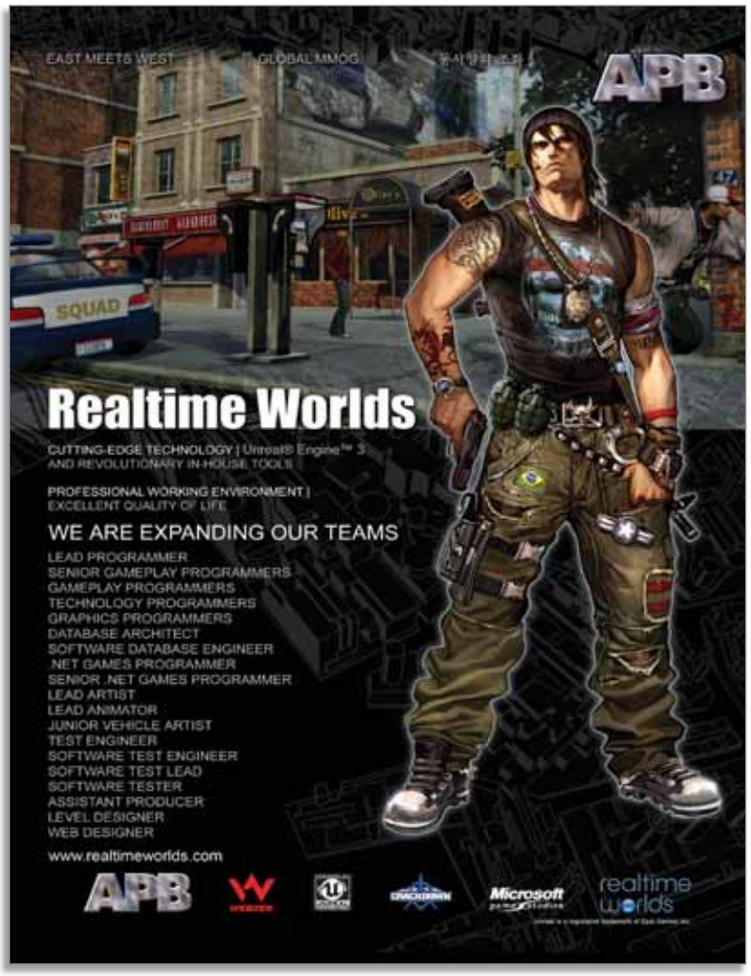

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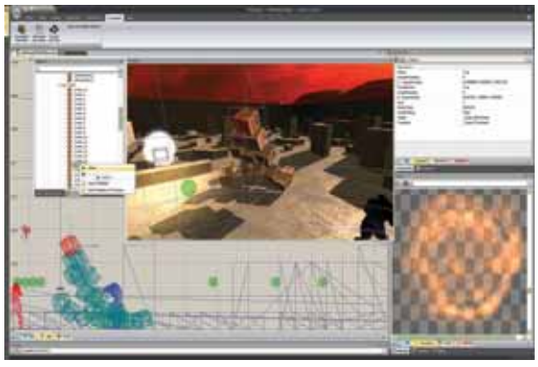
Tools News

Instinct Technologies and University of Abertay unveil education package

The University of Abertay Dundee and Instinct Technologies have signed a deal to provide an education package to colleges and universities looking to start courses on games design. The package will marry university-level training courses provided by Abertay with Instinct Technologies' games development studio software.

Instinct Technology's business development director, Mike Gamble, said: "This agreement is exciting on a number of levels. Not only are we partnering with the UK's premier provider of game development education, but we are also helping to create a situation where tomorrow's game developers will arrive in the workplace with invaluable experience of Instinct Studio under their belts."



Paul Fullwood, Abertay's professor of video games technology, added: "We are delighted to have concluded this deal with Instinct Technology. Abertay can now not only provide a 'best in class' commercial game middleware platform for our own students, but also, we take on the welcome role of a centre of excellence and guarantor of longevity for these technologies.

"In the coming years Abertay will disseminate these technologies and its training programme to other universities and colleges. We see this as a pivotal role for universities in support of the creative industries."

www.instinct-tech.com

GARAGEGAMES REVVING ON ALL ENGINES

It's a busy time for GarageGames at the moment, with the release of its Torque X engine and another console port of its flagship Torque Game Engine. Available to all XNA Creators Club members and Torque Game Builder owners for free, Torque X features a tile editor, particle effects and physics modelling. Currently limited to 2D game creation, the engine will be updated with full 3D support in a future update.

In other Torque news, the Torque Game Engine is now available for Wii licensing – a move the company says will help those developers looking to make titles for the Wii Software downloadable games platform. Those hoping to license Torque for Wii and planning to make games for Wii Software (or Wii Ware as it is called in the US) will be able to get the software for a heavily discounted price – much lower than those licensing the software to make boxed products.

"I think every game designer has a few ideas about how they could use the Wii console's extraordinary features to make fun games," commented Josh Williams, GarageGames CEO. "Torque for Wii makes it easier to focus on creating high-quality experiences for the Wii, rather than implementing the technologies and tools it takes to just get started."

www.garagegames.com

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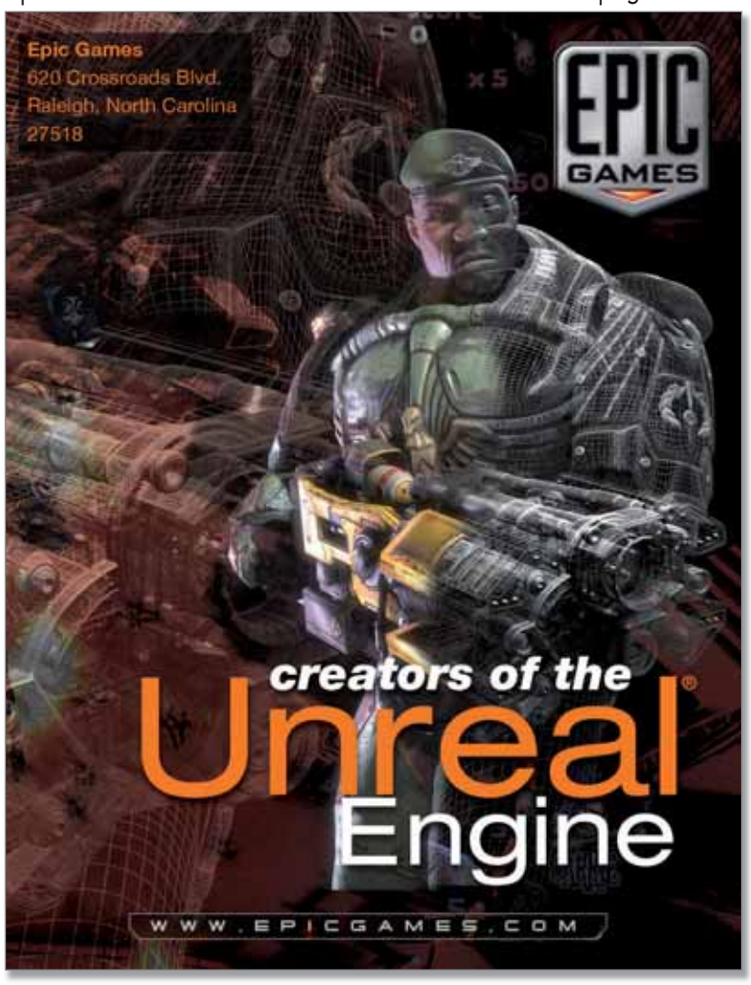

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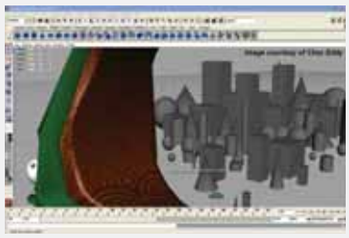

Founded in sunny San Rafael in 1982, Autodesk has grown to become one of the biggest players in the visualisation and visual effect domains. With its acquisitions of Discreet and Alias, Autodesk now has a wide product range serving a diverse group of customers from local governments to Hollywood special FX houses.

In addition to being widely used in the videogame industry, Autodesk software is behind some of the most popular of current TV shows, from 'invisible' SFX shows such as *Desperate Housewives* and *Arrested Development* to visual extravaganzas like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Lost*.

UPCOMING GAMES USING AUTODESK PRODUCTS:
Unreal Tournament 3 (Epic Games), *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* (Naughty Dog), *Stranglehold* (Midway), *Too Human* (Silicon Knights), *Age of Conan* (Funcom).

KEY SOFTWARE:
3D Studio Max 9: The latest version of Autodesk's flagship 3D package offers improved hair and cloth simulation and 64-bit support for Windows.

Maya 8: The other major 3D content studio, Maya is a powerful, integrated 3D modelling, animation, effects and rendering solution, optimised for multi-core and 64-bit processors.

MotionBuilder 7: Autodesk's character performance and animation software features auto-rigging, precision-animation tools and an advanced Story Timeline.

HumanIK: A modular run-time middleware solution that provides dynamic in-game character animation and run-time editing of animation data. Available for Xbox 360, PS3, PC, PlayStation 2 and Xbox.

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USA
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Fax: 415 507 5100

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Farnborough, Hampshire,
GU14 6FG, UK
Phone: +44 (0)1252 456600
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Services News

Animazoo boosted with two new recruits

Motion capture technology specialist Animazoo has expanded its operation with the addition of two new members to its sales team.

Paul Collimore (*pictured right*) joins the company as sales manager from MEDACS, where he was UK sales manager. He will use his 12 years experience in sales to focus on targeted industry sales activity and develop a new leasing and rental option for Animazoo products.

"My work in the medical profession relates well to motion capture as biomechanics industries use mocap to enhance surgical procedures. Medical will be one of my client industry focus areas as well as games companies, universities and research institutions," explains Collimore.

Animazoo's second new recruit is Akouvi Ahoomey (*pictured left*), a native French speaker who will cover French-speaking countries in her role as territory manager.

"Business development and account management has been the focus of my previous experience, primarily in the French speaking markets. This will enable me to further develop Animazoo's presence in these territories and strengthen reseller relationships," said Ahoomey.

The recruitment comes as Animazoo launches its latest product, the IGS-190, the next generation of its previous Gypsy Gyro 18 mo-cap system.

SDI GETS ELEVATED

US private equity firm Elevation Partners will acquire localisation company SDI Media Group, one of the world's largest localisation service providers with a global staff network of over 650 employees and 4,000 freelancers.

Elevation is most well-known in the games industry for spearheading the assembly of independent developer merger Bioware/Pandemic, which was overseen by now-EA-president John Riccitiello.

Barry Perlstein, president and CEO of SDI Media, said: "Elevation's operational and financial experience, along with their deep insights and industry relationships, will help us continue to meet our clients' complex needs in this rapidly changing market. We are extremely pleased about this new arrangement and believe it will have long-term benefits for our clients and our employees."

"SDI Media plays an important role in facilitating the delivery of content to a growing client base across the globe," said Bret Pearlman, co-founder and managing director of Elevation Partners. "We believe that SDI Media and its management team will continue to build on its history of technological innovation and industry leadership, and we look forward to working closely with them."

AARDVARK'S SWIFT SUCCESS

Aardvark Swift Recruitment is celebrating the success of its Graduate Recruitment division and encouraging more clients to get on board to help solve the skills shortage in the UK games industry.

After an increased investment in its graduate team and the development of a two-year strategy to increase the number of graduate placements made, its effort has appeared to pay off – with more graduates placed in the first half of 2007 than in the whole of 2006.

"We've campaigned consistently for studios to consider taking talented newcomers, especially at a time when there is such a shortage of experienced coders," explained Lisa Corbett, graduate recruiter at Aardvark Swift.

But there's still more to be done, she explains: "We know we can place more graduates into the UK games industry and intend building on the relationships we have already put in place. We want to continue to provide students with a real chance to get into the games industry."

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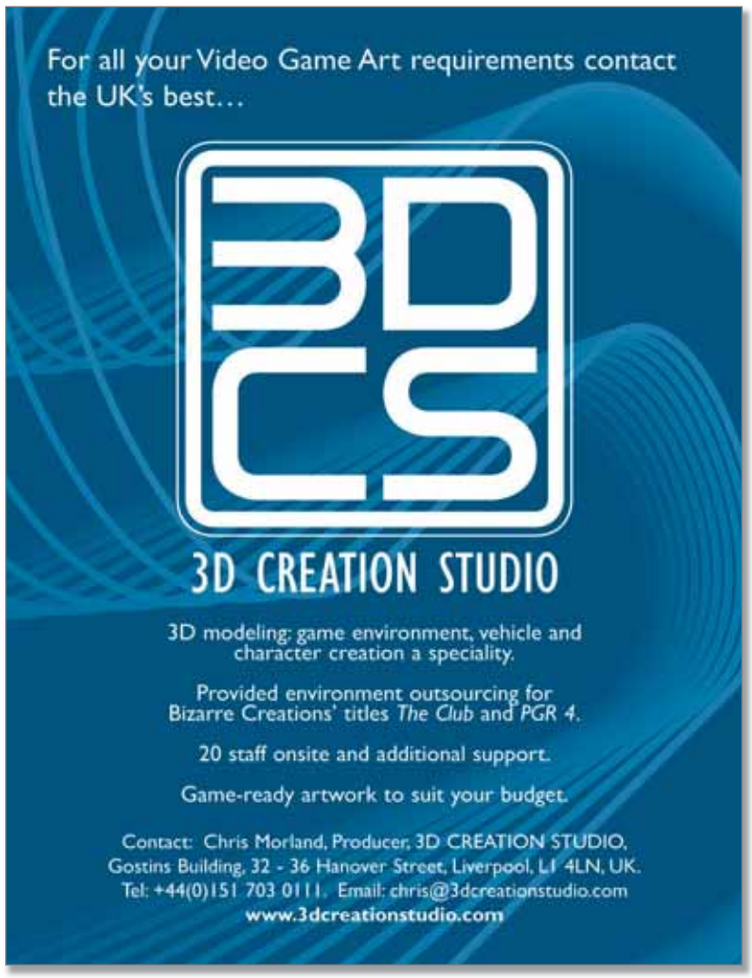
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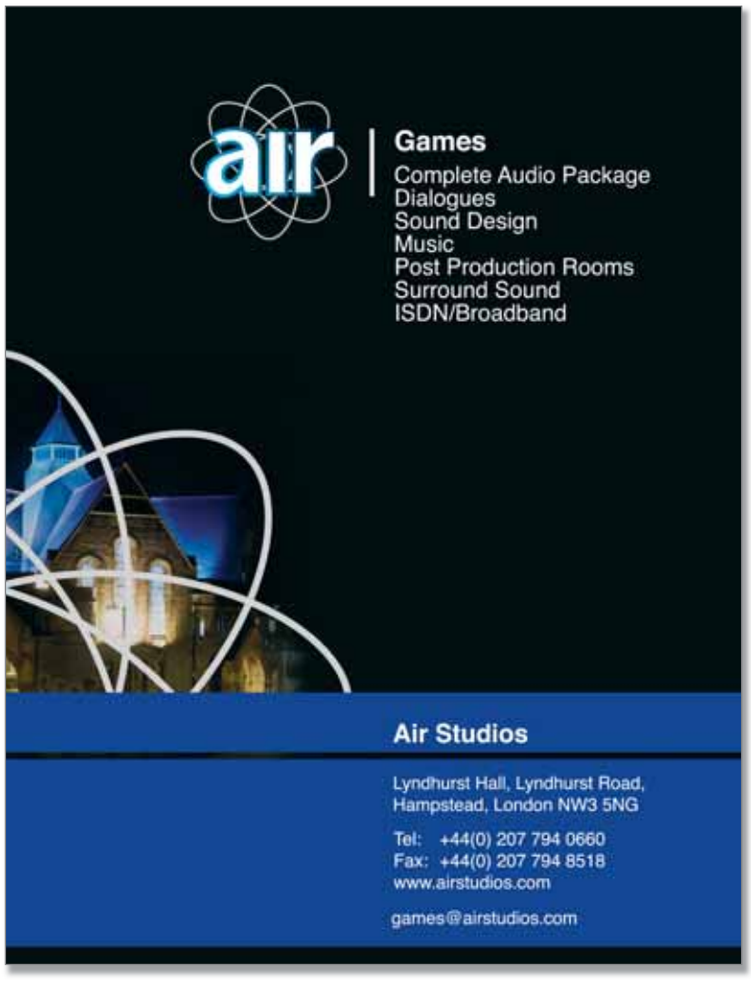

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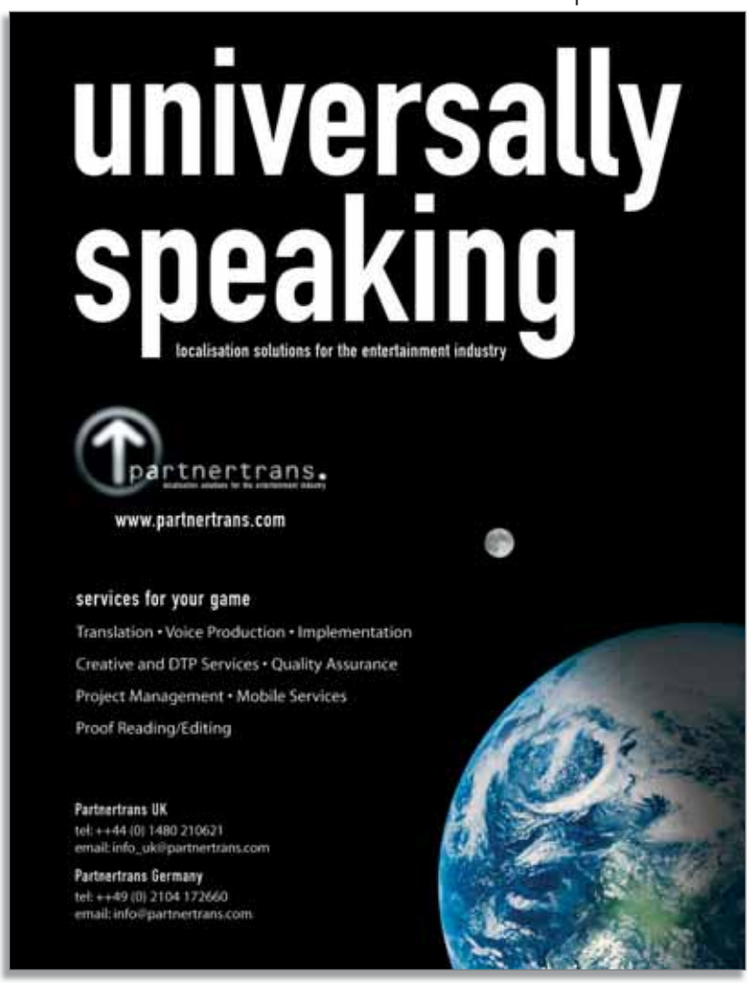

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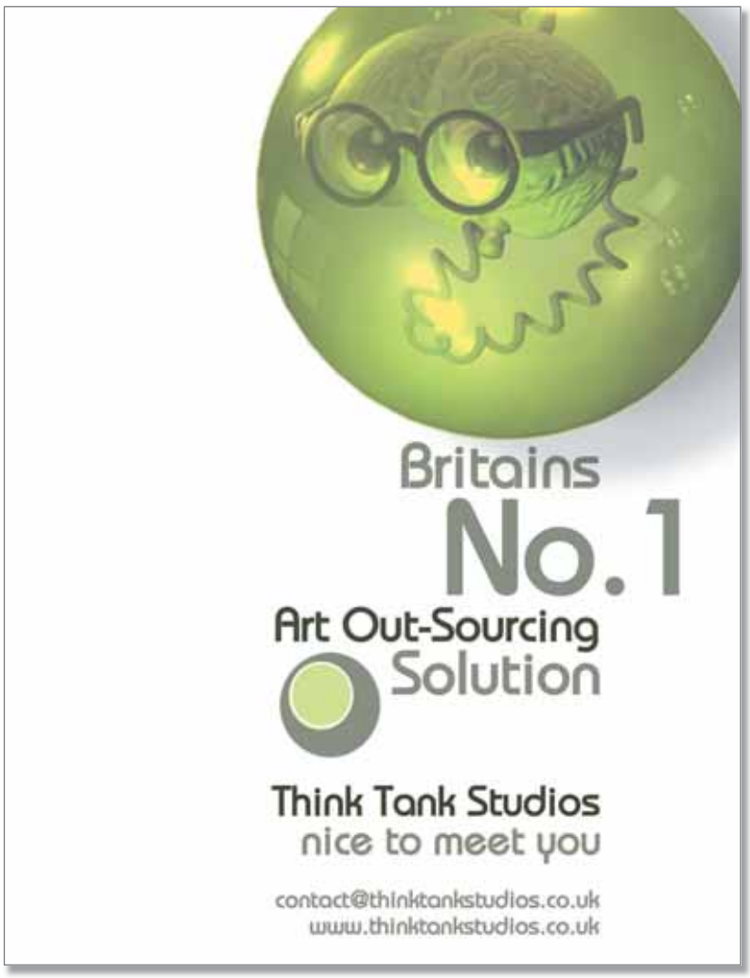

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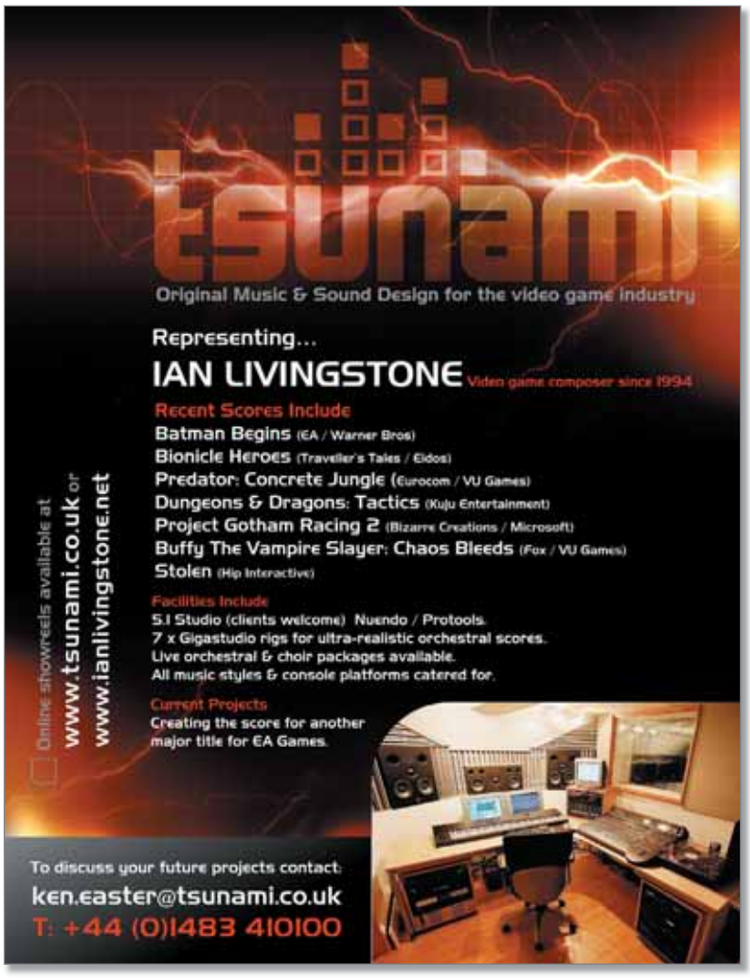
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Services Spotlight

3D CREATION STUDIO

FACTFILE
Area of expertise: Art outsourcing
Location: Liverpool, UK
Founded: 2006
Number of Employees: 20 on-site, 15 freelancers
W: www.3dcreationstudio.com

Key Personnel: Steve Donovan (owner, art director), Chris Morland (producer, business development manager), Shaun Hollywood (creative producer), Tibor Toth (lead technical artist), Marc Stewart (lead artist)

Recent work:
■ *Project Gotham Racing 4* (Bizarre Creations), *The Club* (Bizarre Creations)

Currently working on:
■ "A sequel to a PlayStation 2 racing game that sold one million units," plus several Xbox 360 / PS3 titles.

A classic success story, 3D Creation Studio was established in 2006 as a one man operation but, thanks to high demand, has already been forced to relocate to new offices in the heart of Liverpool – proving that the demand for outsourced in-game artwork doesn't need to be fulfilled overseas.

The studio has a good relationship with Bizarre Creations and has contributed greatly to both *Project Gotham Racing 4*, set for release in Autumn 2007, and *The Club*, a blood-sport gladatorial-style combat game with a heavy emphasis on combos and point scoring.

Steve Donovan, art director and owner of 3DCS, tells us: "3DCS exist as a resource for video game publishers and developers, wherever their location. We've got a highly skilled team who are engaged in creating graphics at the cutting edge of console gaming.

"With our current clients and an exciting array of projects lined up 3DCS is on its way to establishing itself as the leading UK based game artwork solution. 3DCS wants to become a key player in a sector of the games industry that was worth $1.1 billion in 2006 and is expected to rise to $2.5 billion by 2010."

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Training News

Yorkshire universities create UK 'Game Academy'

Yorkshire's Bradford, Hull and Sheffield Hallam universities have teamed up to create what they say is an answer to the UK's talent drought – the Game Republic Academy.

Regional screen agency Screen Yorkshire and local games development trade association Game Republic have committed £120,000 for the Game Republic Academy scheme to run for two years. The programme provides sponsorship opportunities for burgeoning developers across the globe to study for a masters in games development in the region.

The Academy boasts work experience opportunities and is backed by local developers Rockstar Leeds, Team 17 and Sumo Digital. Each will employ the students involved during summer periods and allow them to carry out their final year projects at their studios.

A course at each university is part of the scheme: a masters courses in Artificial Intelligence for Games at the University of Bradford, Games Programming at the University of Hull, or Entertainment Software at Sheffield Hallam. Each course starts in September.

The GRA provides students with up to £3,000 sponsorship each and plans to work closely with the industry to make sure that each course is current and relevant. In time it is hoped the scheme will attract a further £30,000 of investment from games companies.

The news is timely, coming off the back of recent claims by developers that universities must up their game when it comes to supporting the games industry, which is in the midst of a staffing crunch.

Jonathan Purdy, director of games studies at the University of Hull, said: "We are very pleased to be involved in the Game Republic Academy and are particularly pleased to have the support and backing of the games industry.

"This collaboration should ensure that the brightest talent is given the training and resources required to pursue a career in the computer games industry."

Peter Cowling, professor of computer science at the University of Bradford, added: "We are delighted to be one of the three leading universities in the UK providing video games courses now in collaboration with the Game Republic Academy.

"We are exceptionally placed to offer students the kind of training the industry is crying out for. With high profile industry figures pointing towards AI (Artificial Intelligence) as the next big thing for commercial games, we are able to offer our new AI for Games Masters programme - the first of its kind in the world.

"Game Republic Academy's support will allow talented graduates from this programme to be part of the AI revolution in commercial games."

TRINITY COLLEGE GETS INDUSTRY BACKING

Trinity College's new Interactive Entertainment Technology masters degree is to be backed by several industry heavyweights: as well as a Microsoft-sponsored XNA Gamelab, the course will be supported by Demonware and Radical Entertainment.

Course director Dr. Steven Collins, previously co-founder and CTO of Havok, said: "Interactive entertainment is one of the fastest growing and most exciting areas of global industry right now, and presents a fantastic opportunity for students and individuals.

"The quality of this course, coupled with the support of industry leaders such as Microsoft, Demonware and Radical Entertainment provides students with access to the very latest thinking, techniques and technology."

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07

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Conference kicks off on Monday 13th August with a keynote from Ubisoft President Yves Guillemot. There's also the prestigious EDGE Award, plus a networking reception at 6.30pm on the first day.

Edinburgh Interactive Festival hosts its Game Screenings programme on Tuesday 14th August.

Keynotes and speakers include:

- Ubisoft President Yves Guillemot
- BBC New Vision
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THE BYRONIC MAN

S.I.M.O.N B.Y.R.O.N has something to say about P.C. G.A.M.E.R.S…

I'm not really a fan of PC games (too fiddly), consumers (too moany) nor G.N.A.A.S.T.G.A.T. (games named as acronyms simply to get a trademark) but by far the best news of last month was when a bunch of fiddly, moaning *S.T.A.L.K.E.R* players decided to go on strike because the game wasn't patched to what they deemed acceptable standards.

As far as pathetic displays of solidarity are concerned, this is up there with the bras being burnt until the wimmin were told we'd let them vote – though they were too stupid to realise they actually wouldn't be counted.

I bet the top brass at THQ were furious. "Hang on a minute: the people who've given us the money for our game – which requires no further subscription or payment in order to enjoy in multiplayer – have decided not to play it any more? Shit, we'd better get on that, otherwise… well, nothing will actually happen."

Be thankful THQ doesn't have an office in *Second Life*. A couple of hundred *STALKER* players could picket outside, doing literally nothing but rudimentary idle animations repeating every couple of seconds. It could go on for minutes before the bearded male players got bored and started trying to get off with the other bearded male players pretending they're not bearded male players.

"…they're the type that saturate forums pretending the Wii isn't just a glorified compendium of bored games…"

STALKER seems a strange game to be striking in. It'd be much more serious if this happened to *World of Warcraft* – if that lot stopped playing for whatever reason the real world would be overrun by socially awkward leather makers who've developed a strange type of obsessive compulsive disorder. Must… collect… more… Sainsbury's… active… kids'… vouchers…

It's a shame the *Guitar Hero* community's only axe to grind is the replica Gibson that comes with the game, otherwise I'd be right with them. Better protection for people playing publicly, would be my demand. If you're not allowed to spit at or punch the morons operating our national rail service, then there's no way hitting talented videogames players in the bollocks with full cans of lager should be considered an acceptable pastime. Unless they're the type that saturate forums pretending the Wii is actually a bona fide videogames system and not a glorified compendium of bored games.

In a fictional world, they're all at it. Xbox Live's *Project Gotham* racers deliberately driving slowly around a virtual Edinburgh, illustrating their outrage at the proposed real-life congestion charge by paying 45 pounds a year to use an online service which should essentially be free. *Oblivion* players outraged at the constant charging for premium content and lack of multiplayer support are stood silently in identical-looking fields, heads bowed until their demands are met. To tie in with the game, they're hopping on the spot in order to increase their athletics abilities. And they've got dressed without looking at their bottom half so they'll not realise for hours that they've basically been skipping through fields with their cocks out. Well that's what happened to me, anyway. True story.

That said, there are more actual cases of organised industrial action. The campaign for more sequels is going well – consumers are no longer buying original IP. Marginalised male gamers are now on strike until there are more men in women in gaming. And European DS owners could register their displeasure at having to wait months for games which came out ages ago in America by pirating them off the Internet.

But at least *STALKER*'s actual striking will provide a chapter in the Government's recently-announced Computer Games GSCE. Whereas once our nation's children could have learned about the miners' strike of the early 80s, now they can gain qualifications by recalling how a few disgruntled players of an over-rated PC first person shooter changed nothing by doing nothing.

simon@thetriforce.com

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